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THE FOOD OF LOVE.

BY

J. H. TWELLS, JR.

If music be the food of love, play on,
 Give me excess of it.

Twelfth Night.

CHAPTER I.

THAT section of New York, where the flesh and the devil reign in pampered union, was agape with amazement. Algernon de Forest Lorton was not young, nor liable to lose his head. He was, moreover, a bred-in-the-bone Knickerbocker, and having served so long as prime minister to the Golden Ass, that deity of Elite Frivolity, had come to be looked upon as almost public property.

When the announcement was made of his engagement to Elizabeth Thorley, there was a great braying of discontent among the followers of the vain Asinego; much shaking of heads over tea-cups; and censorious smiles at the clubs. Elizabeth, though well-born, had made no impression upon the social retina. Six years back she had taken a timorous dip in the sparkling surf of débutantism, only to drift prematurely and unnoticed into the quieter depths of reconciled womanhood.

Among the women of her acquaintance she was considered dull, and somewhat morose; but one woman's judgment of another is like the sediment of vinegar by which is condemned all properties not native to itself. She possessed neither remarkable beauty nor wealth; and so the modish world, after a cursory glance, had ignored her until the news of her betrothal made her an object of interest.

Lorton was popular in club and drawing-room. The breadth of his bank account served as a fitting canopy to a personality peculiarly well-adapted to the rôle he played. Finding himself, however, well down the declining plane of his forty-seventh year, he had looked about for a suitable person to companion him in the senility to which he looked forward.

Chance had at this time brought Elizabeth to his notice, and the absence in her of that delirious craving for excitement that characterized most women of his set determined him to accept her as wife and caretaker.

In spite of his deeply-furrowed brow and cheeks, Lorton was decidedly good-looking. Indeed there seemed to Elizabeth to be much in his favor. For New York, she was shamefully poor, living in patient retirement with a maiden aunt in a little three-story house on East Forty-seventh street; one of a group of three dwellings with cracked brown-stone fronts, crowded in between the luxuriant back garden of a millionaire's palace and the roar and dust of a railroad.

Now and then she was recognized on the street by an acquaintance of her début year and exchanged the stilted, hypocritical nod enforced by decorum. At free lectures she was frequently to be seen, sitting gravely motionless, with her great gray eyes

fixed upon the speaker, her well-featured face glowing with the luminance of controlled aspirations. People said, when they spoke of her at all, that she wrote articles and published them under a *nom de plume*, but few had had sufficient interest to read and judge of her ability. Never being seen with the girls of her own age, who still clung desperately to the skirts of society, Elizabeth was well nigh forgotten. And she in turn, after three years of neglect, had chosen to ignore the vapid sphere to which she was entitled by birth; to seek content by suppressing the more buoyant side of her nature and cultivating ideals.

She was in her twenty-eighth summer when, through the sly manœuvrings of Fate, she met Lorton. The meeting chanced in a suburban spot of rural solitude, where the man had gone, urged by a rare impulse of kindness, to visit a friend whose extravagant living had forced him into retirement. To Elizabeth it was like the fulfilment of some vaguely anticipated destiny, bringing into her life an element which, in spite of cherished theories, she secretly craved. He had come with suave speech, courteous manner, and a smile of white teeth, and she had accepted him as the personification of an ideal not fully comprehended.

"How did you ever come to fall in love with her?" asked his best friend one evening, as they sat alone at the club with cigars and whisky. "I thought the golden hour for that sort of thing was lost to you and me."

"In love!" returned Lorton, contemptuously. "Don't be an ass, Fred. You and I at least can be honest with each other. She is a good little woman; and a fellow wants to end his days with a good woman—if he can find one!"

Fred Elsworth twirled his cigar thoughtfully.

"So you are going to settle down," he murmured.

"Yes. It's about time, I fancy. I'm no longer what I used to be, old chap; the dog's had his day, and it's either settle down or be knocked down by paralysis. Old Doseall said if I had a return of the attack of last year there would be no hope for me."

Both men smoked for a while in silence. Then Lorton continued:

"I'm all broken up, Fred. A man can't go the pace we've been going for the past fifteen years and keep his health. I looked the situation squarely in the face; I saw myself a desolate old man sick and suffering, with no one in the world to care whether I lived or died, and I didn't fancy it."

"But obligations are incurred by matrimony, my friend," returned Fred, as he shot more seltzer into his glass. "It is not merely the finding of a caretaker. Won't the bonds fret you? And then—with all respect to the lady of your choice—will not her quiet, docile nature be rather a tame exchange for the life you've been leading here?"

Algernon Lorton looked at his friend quizzically. "Do you think I am meditating entering a monastery?" he asked. "I am certainly not going to give up my club and friends, and limit myself solely to the society of one woman; not by a jugful! What I propose is to have a home, where on occasions I can always be sure of finding a sympathizer, a kindly nurse, who will make me forget when I have been guilty of a folly, and whose love will serve to banish the pricks of conscience that come with age, and are really the first symptoms of brain-softening."

Fred laughed, and selected a fresh cigar from a box on the table. It was not his policy to criticise

Lorton's theories, nor those of any other man upon whose friendship he depended for the, to him, essential delicacies of life; therefore he gave no utterance to the thought in his mind. Lorton stretched himself lazily and puffed contentedly. His self-satisfaction irritated Elsworth almost to the point of cynicism. He controlled himself, however; merely remarking, as he watched a ring of smoke rise through the cloudy air: "A wife, you know, is not always a sympathizer, nor always a kindly nurse."

Lorton smiled complacently. "I've been careful in my choice," he said. "I've not gone about it like a blind schoolboy. The experiences that have broken my health have at least taught me how to choose my mate. Miss Thorley is neither beautiful nor brilliant. She is ignorant of the world, and therefore innocent. That, my boy, is the sort of woman men like you and I want for a wife. Beauty and brilliancy are all very well for amusement, but they are incompatible with comfort. After knowing them all one's life, one craves the clear water of untinctured nature in the end; it cools the fever of the past!"

"I think you are right," Fred replied, "it's not exactly joyous to look forward to a lonely old age, especially when it is so oppressively near. The same thought has been in my mind, as you know; and I've had my eyes open; but I must own, I've failed to find a woman to whom I should care to be irrevocably tied. The young ones are all too flippant; and the more mature are either merely looking for a home, or forget the man in their desire for a husband. After all, though, as the saying goes, what does it matter whom one marries; he's bound to find the next morning that he's married some one else!"

They both laughed at this; and Fred, catching sight of Norman Halloway, flushed as usual, called to him to join in a toast to Lorton. Others hearing approached jovially, and the small hours found the group enlarged to ten, and uncommonly noisy.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. FERGUSON SEYMORE was giving a dinner the next evening for Elizabeth Thorley, the daughter, as she expressed it, of her "dearest friend, Agnes Wurtney." That the memory of this dearest friend had conveniently faded from her mind a week after this dearest friend's death, only to be revived by the announcement of Algernon Lorton's engagement, she did not regard as necessary to mention. For the occasion Elizabeth had gathered together all of her savings and, with her inherited good taste, had procured a beautiful and suitable gown. Naturally she wished to appear as well as possible; and the faithful mirror had already told her what others were both too selfish and uninterested to see: that in her correct features and good skin were concealed possibilities which needed merely the accessory of appropriate clothing to be made apparent.

She had gone to a leading modiste, who was not slow to perceive the exceptional beauty of her figure; and who at once advised her upon certain points of which she had been woefully ignorant.

Elizabeth had not seen Lorton for two days, and when the maid announced his arrival to take her to Mrs. Seymore's she was conscious of an unwonted timidity concerning the effect her changed appearance would have upon him. Before leaving her

room she paused before a long mirror and surveyed the tall, elegantly-gowned young woman there reflected. Even the pose of her head was new, and her eyes shone with unusual brilliancy. Was dress alone responsible for the change, she wondered, or was it due in part to a new element in her life, the atmosphere of a world for which her inborn nature had hungered and yet been denied?

Her pulses beat wildly as she turned away, and proceeded to the drawing-room; where she found Lorton gazing abstractedly at his patent leathers and thoughtfully dragging at his moustache. He did not observe her entrance and Elizabeth hesitated. She felt that he would be pleased by the change in her and would probably praise and congratulate her. At the thought she felt the color rise in her cheeks, and her breath came quickly. These emotions she interpreted as love. The rustle of her skirts, as she timidly advanced, caused Lorton to look up.

"Ah," he murmured, and started forward.

Then he paused and surveyed her. She was blushing as she watched him, but with a woman's keen perception she noticed that the gleam of pleasure that had come into his eyes was controlled and subdued by his mouth. Instead of kissing her, as was his habit, he took out his watch, and said: "We are a little late, we must hurry—dear."

Elizabeth was hurt; not so much through disappointment as by the knowledge that he had wilfully suppressed the pleasure that she felt he should have revealed to her as her due. She turned to take her wrap from a chair.

"Don't you like my gown?" she asked, when her back was turned. To her annoyance her voice quivered slightly, and the color in her face burned hotly.

"Yes ; it will do very nicely," Lorton returned in the guarded and stilted tone of ingrained worldliness.

"Do ?" repeated Elizabeth, as she turned upon him a pair of wondering, frank, gray eyes. "Du-Pont made it, and considers it her success of the season !"

"Yes ; it is very fine,—very," said her future husband, in a conciliatory tone, "but come, we must be off."

She stood passive as he placed the wrap about her shoulders. A new problem was beginning to stir in her mind.

"I liked you best in the gray cashmere," remarked Lorton, as he put on his own coat, "I don't—seem to know you in this."

Elizabeth had reached the door ; she paused and looked back.

"That thing !" she exclaimed, contemptuously, then she laughed. "I'm afraid the truth is that you have never known me. I to-night feel more like myself than I have felt for years."

As they entered Mrs. Seymore's drawing-room there was a hush in the murmur of conversation. So this was the girl who was to hold the position of guardian angel in the twilight of Lorton's life ! This, then, was the "plain, womanly woman" whom that gay pet of society said he had chosen to be the nurse and comfort of his declining years !

The men were surprised beyond all hiding ; and the women, forgetting their good manners, allowed their jaws to drop and their eyes to spread wide.

Elizabeth looked about her calmly for an instant, but finding herself the cynosure of this ill-bred stare, her color deepened, and her heart beat excitedly. She approached Mrs. Seymore.

"I must apologize for being late," she said, with a slight tremor, while Lorton frowned irritably at what he considered an unnecessary speech, "I'm afraid——"

"Oh, no, my dear child, you are not the least bit late!" interrupted her hostess with rustling impressiveness. She took the girl's two hands and squeezed them cordially, as she looked her over. Madame DuPont's "success of the season" was indeed a sartorial triumph.

"And even had you been late I must have forgiven you," she added, enthusiastically, "you are charming! How like your dear mother!"

Then followed the presentations, and the installation of Elizabeth in a low chair, with old Major Seymore on one side, and Fred Elsworth on the other.

Fred's eyes twinkled naughtily as he glanced up now and then from Elizabeth's fairly moulded face, and faultless throat and neck, to his good-looking friend, who, somewhat subdued in manner, stood chivalrously bending over his cousin by marriage, the hideous, pitiless-tongued Mrs. Spectre.

"I heard you had chosen a plain girl, Algernon," she was saying, in her wheezy, but penetrating voice, "and I could not find it in my heart to forgive you; for I knew our naughty Algie would never be content to mate with a sparrow, after the brilliant birds he has followed." The old lady chuckled with peculiarly irritating satisfaction, causing a little knot of wrinkles to form low on her left cheek and her diamonds to glisten splendidly.

Lorton also affected to be amused; but her words annoyed him. Why would people so misunderstand him? He was the sovereign of his own life; the woman he chose to marry was merely an adopted necessity, like a crutch to a lame man. Heavens!

had he not had his choice of beautiful women! All this talk would turn the girl's head, and rob her of the very attribute in her he most admired.

Mrs. Spectre raised her lorgnon, which had been likened, by some profane member of society, to the emerald of Nero, because it had proved itself so pitiless.

"She will do; she will do," she said, critically, after regarding Elizabeth a moment or two. "A fine presence, a good head, and handsome eyes. She is not likely to fade either; she will improve with time, I should judge." She turned the "emerald" upon her companion. "When you are all gone, she will be in her prime, Algie, my boy," she said quite gravely; "If you don't break her heart the first year, you won't be able to."

Lorton was secretly incensed at what he considered the ill-breeding of these remarks, and was grateful to be spared more of them by the announcement of dinner. He gave his arm to Mrs. Seymore, and the others immediately paired off as the hostess indicated.

Paul Edgerton, Mrs. Seymore's nephew, who had been the last to arrive, was appointed to take Elizabeth in. She had not exchanged a word with him, although they had been formally presented immediately upon his entrance. He was considerably taller than she, squarely built, and athletic. As Elizabeth, with her hand resting upon his arm, looked up and obtained the first really good view she had yet had of him, an impression of having known him before, not casually, but intimately, affected her like a shock.

At the moment he was gravely and studiously watching his aunt's train, in an effort not to tread upon it.

In that quick glance she had given him Elizabeth appreciated the soft light on his wavy hair, the boyish shadow about his eyes, and a slight hollow in his cheek, which unaccountably awoke her sympathy. She had never seen him before that night, but the touch of his arm seemed familiar and contenting. Neither of them spoke as they traversed the hall, and yet each was keenly conscious of the other. While every one else was chatting and laughing, these two advanced in silence, as though they had not a thought between them.

"Handsome, but dull," whispered young Blackstone, who, with the fair Harriet Everett, came immediately behind Elizabeth.

"Oh, she is not considered so," returned Harriet, with rare honesty; "she is awfully well-read, and she writes."

"Well, she might easily be well-read and write, and yet be deadly dull at a dinner party," rejoined Blackstone. "The sort of intelligence needed to read and write is the least appropriate to an affair of this sort. If she were blessed with a little ordinary wit, for instance, she might now have an idea to communicate."

As Elizabeth seated herself, Edgerton glanced down upon her a slow, comprehensive glance. She was unbuttoning her glove, and instinctively she felt his gaze. When he was seated, the silence for the first time threatened to become embarrassing. A rose lay temptingly near Elizabeth's hand, and she touched it nervously, at the same moment raising her eyes involuntarily to her companion's face.

"Are you fond of roses?" he asked; and she said, "Yes, distractingly fond of them," in a tone that even she herself realized to be affected.

Their eyes met, and his said, "You are lying,"

and hers replied, "I know it; but you are behind a mask." The color deepened in her cheeks, and she raised the rose to her lips confusedly. Lorton, who happened to be just opposite, gave her a reproving look, which she had the misfortune to catch. She bit her lips and replaced the rose, wretchedly embarrassed and annoyed by Lorton's attitude of reproof. In an instant she turned impulsively towards Edgerton.

"Why did you let me do that?" she asked.

Edgerton laughed almost boisterously.

"Why should you not?" he returned, his eyes bright with genial comprehension. "It was put there to tempt you."

"And do you approve of one giving way to temptation?"

"It is a woman's privilege."

"A woman's?" She glanced at him critically. "Are you so liberal toward our sex that you are willing to countenance all weakness in us, or do you consider us too feeble to be capable of resisting even so small an enticement?"

"Judging from my personal experience of women, I believe that she who deserves privileges will never abuse them."

"But you have recognized the yielding to temptation as one of her privileges; and is not the mere fact of her yielding an abuse in itself?"

"No; because to a right-minded woman such things as would tempt her would in no way injure her if yielded to," returned Edgerton, with an amused smile, that revealed itself only in the corners of his long, blue eyes. Elizabeth was perplexed, not knowing exactly whether to take his words seriously or not.

"What sophistry!" she said, with mock scorn,

"It is the yielding to petty temptations that weakens right-mindedness."

"Well, when right-mindedness is destroyed there are no longer any privileges. Your raising that rose has brought you one step nearer the stern bars of restriction!"

They both laughed, realizing what nonsense they were uttering.

"I'm afraid I am not blessed with much right-mindedness," said Elizabeth after a moment, "for it is almost impossible for me to resist large——"

She paused abruptly and bowed a blushing face over her bouillon, appreciating with horror what significance her words might convey to him.

Edgerton broke his bread carefully, without raising his eyes.

In that instant they were both peculiarly and keenly conscious of the other's mental attention. The voices of the rest faded into a confused murmur. They became aware, for the first time, of music, soft and tender, wafted from the hall beyond.

On the other side Elizabeth could feel the old major's arm touching hers with the irritating persistence of deliberate intention. This was an idiosyncrasy of the major's; the proximity of youth was a condition from which he believed his aged person might derive benefit, and consequently he had persuaded his wife to so arrange the table that he might be placed with a youthful person on either side of him.

"The roses are like reflections of your face in little mirrors," he murmured, bringing his parchment-like visage closer to hers; and his breath reached her offensively. She shrank a little, imperceptibly. A wave of dread passed over her, seeming to convey some significance that she was unable to grasp. She

was conscious of a bodily appreciation of Edgerton's nearness, a sense of security in his presence, as vaguely comforting as the knowledge of a compatriot's nearness is to one stranded unexpectedly in a foreign and uncongenial land.

"All small things are contemptible," Edgerton was saying, with astonishing appropriateness to her half-spoken thought.

Elizabeth looked up quickly. An emotional chill passed over her, as though a cold hand had been drawn across her face. She stared at him. "How did you know that I was thinking that?" she asked.

"I did not know," he replied; "the thought came to me involuntarily, and even now I scarcely know why I uttered it."

They looked upon each other, and, as before, their environment seemed to be withdrawn—the voices, the music, everything.

"It is a pet assertion of mine," she said at length, in the hope of throwing off this peculiar influence. "I hate small things. I have always felt that I should rather marry a man with vices, and—one who beat me, than one who could stoop to deceive me with a lie."

Edgerton laughed at her seriousness. "There is fortunately a happy medium," he said, and, unintentionally, he glanced toward Lorton.

Elizabeth saw the glance, and her eyes fell.

"Yes," she returned, softly, feeling herself, without reasoning, obliged to say something.

She toyed with her fork, and her gaze became fixed. For the first time that evening she realized her Self, the Self that had grown with the years of her life, the familiar Ego which had bowed uncomplainingly beneath a yoke of antagonistic circumstances. In the novelty of her new surroundings,

and the sudden intoxicating sense of her good looks, so long disguised even to herself, she had felt a new individuality leap to life within her, a new exuberance of thought and feeling. Under the grateful warmth of admiration from eyes so long indifferent, the flower of her nature seemed to unfold the inner petals of its passionate consciousness. Like a breath of spring air, something had come forcing open gently some closed window of her life, flooding it all with gladness, even to the sadder recesses.

The shadows of solitude were scattered by the sound of a friend's voice.

CHAPTER III.

WHEN the women had withdrawn, Fred Elsworth crossed over and took a chair near Lorton. He threw one leg over the other, took his cigar from between his lips, and laughed.

"What's the joke?" asked Lorton irritably.

Elsworth only laughed the more. Then he leaned over and knocked the ashes from his cigar.

"You lied to me, Lorton," he said quietly.

"What do you mean?"

"You said she was plain and dull—a good, comforting housewife! Oh, you double-dyed rascal, to try and deceive your best friend! But I had my doubts, old boy. I've known you a bit too long to be altogether deceived by that bread-and-milk tale."

Lorton knitted his brows.

"This sort of talk is very annoying to me, Fred," he said with rancor. "I wish you would stop it."

Elsworth, who, as usual, had taken more wine than was good for him, laughed again.

"I knew our Don Juan would never be contented with a shirt-mending, bread-baking, housekeeping Eliza. There was some other interpretation for the name, I was sure. Elizabeth is awe-inspiring at a distance, but when it is spelled L-i-l-y, and designates one so tall and fair as——"

"Oh, dry up!" interrupted Lorton, moving restlessly. "This is not the place for such a discussion at best, and I shall be obliged if you'll postpone what you have to say on the subject."

"All right, old chap; no offense intended," returned Fred, with a comprehensive glance at his friend's angry eyes. "I say, will you come round to the club later? We might go to Mrs. White's. She made a particular point of wishing us to be there to-night; her sister is here, and she's a lark!"

"I'll get around about twelve, probably," returned the other man.

Meanwhile Edgerton sat silently smoking and studying Lorton through half-closed eyes.

In the drawing-room Elizabeth sat between Mrs. Spectre and her hostess. Mrs. Seymore held one of her hands fondly and gazed appreciatively at her, picturing her as the future Mrs. Algernon de Forest Lorton, with a handsome *ménage* and an enviable position. She remembered now how fond she had always been of the girl's mother.

"I am so glad we are to know one another better," she said. "You must come to see me often, dear child; you know your dear mother and I were great friends."

Mrs. Spectre leveled the "emerald" at her hostess, then she looked questioningly at Elizabeth.

"Have you been long absent from the city?" she asked.

"I?" returned Elizabeth, with amused surprise,

"I have never been away from New York in my life, except to some suburban place for the summer."

"Ah!" Mrs. Spectre gazed through her lorgnon at a picture across the room, "I imagined you had been away a great deal," she said significantly, "as Mrs. Seymore appears to have so entirely lost track of you."

"Oh," replied Elizabeth, quite unconscious of any hidden meaning, "Mrs. Seymore's life and mine have been so wide apart, we had little chance to meet."

"My dear, you have been very naughty to hide yourself away as you have," her hostess went on, with some effusion. "We must not have any more of that. You must come out and be seen and have a good time."

"Yes, everything is changed," said Mrs. Spectre, as she smoothed a little knot of wrinkles from her left cheek, "you must be made much of now." She met Mrs. Seymore's eyes for an instant only.

Then the men appeared; and Lorton soon after made a sign to Elizabeth, indicating his wish to depart, and the summons was not unwelcome. As they were leaving, Edgerton strolled up and held out his hand.

"Good-night, Miss Thorley," he said; "I shall see you at the Assembly, I suppose?"

"The Assembly?" she repeated. "No, I never go to balls, you know."

"Oh, yes, you must go!" exclaimed Mrs. Seymore. "I shall stop for you and take you with me. You cannot play recluse any longer. I shall accept no excuse. You have a whole week to prepare a gown; and you will enjoy it, I know."

"You are too good," said Elizabeth, gratefully "I should like it of all things. But I have been out of everything for so long."

"You will enjoy it all the more for that," returned Mrs. Seymore, squeezing her hand in final salutation.

When they were in the carriage Lorton sank back with a sigh.

"I am glad to get out of that," he said.

"Why?" asked Elizabeth, in surprise.

"Oh, because it is all so ineffably dull and stupid!"

"I did not find it so; I had a lovely time!"

"You haven't been doing it for twenty years."

"No."

A short silence followed. Then Lorton tugged at the window strap.

"There is a confounded draught here, some place," he remarked, testily.

"Perhaps this is open a little," returned his fiancée, leaning over to examine the window on her side.

"Oh, no; it is this wretched coupé. I've told Barrows, over and over again, never to bring it at night. He's too stupid to live." The last word was drowned in a growl.

Elizabeth sat silent. His words, his tone, and his very movements irritated her as they had never done before. And yet she was not unpleasantly conscious of the many familiar characteristics of his presence; the combined scent of good cigars and wine; the creak of his stiff, immaculate shirt bosom; the faint breath of white violets,—the only boutonnière he would wear. In the gloom she could see the outline of his stooping shoulders; the straight setting of his rather thick neck; the passing glow of street lamps on his sleek head.

All these stood to her mind as the outward visible signs of an indefinable world-culture—a sort of wing.

dust attained only by such moths as flutter about the candle of ultra-fashionable life. Since her earliest childhood that life had allured Elizabeth; and in winning Lorton's admiration she had felt that she had attained the zenith of her destiny. But now there seemed to exist some invisible flaw—something was lacking. A vague sense of dissatisfaction was mingled with her appreciation of his proprietorship over her.

"What ball was Mrs. Seymore persuading you to attend with her?" he asked, after a short silence.

"The Assembly: was it not good of her?"

"Eh; I don't know. . . . You would not go, of course?"

"Yes; I should love to go," returned Elizabeth, with a sudden rush of color which the darkness hid. "Why not? I have only been to one Assembly in my life."

"Oh, well, it's too late now. What sort of a time would you have? Mrs. Seymore only wishes to take you to—well, to serve her own ends."

"To serve her own ends?" repeated the girl, blankly. A gloom began to settle upon the new gladness of her life.

"Yes," said her fiancé, with the irritating pedantry of a man of the world, "you don't understand these things, dear, and I hope you never will. She wants to please me; and because some day my house will be your house,—eh—; do you understand?"

"Yes," returned Elizabeth, faintly, "I understand your meaning, Algernon."

"Well, it is the truth. She doesn't care a fig what sort of a time you will have. She will probably give you a dinner and take you there, and leave you stranded. You know scarcely any of the men going about now; and the few you do know will fight

shy of you on account of your engagement; and altogether it would make a bad impression."

"But you will be there, and—Mr Edgerton said he hoped to see me:—or rather, he asked me if I were going."

"That means nothing. He will probably be engaged the whole evening, and never see you. And as for me, it would be absurd for us to go to a ball and be seen together the whole time."

"I should have *so* liked to go," said Elizabeth, regretfully.

Lorton took her hand. "It will be much better, dear, that you should not," he said, "we shall go to the theatre that night instead, just you and I; shall we? would you like that?"

Elizabeth withdrew her hand gently. "Yes; that would be very nice, of course," she returned.

When the carriage stopped before her aunt's house, she was fretted by some uncomprehended feeling of dread.

"And you, shall you not go to the ball?" she asked. Lorton was opening the carriage door. "Oh, I may drop in for an hour or so, after the theatre," he answered, indifferently, "just to show myself, and pay my respects to a few of the matrons. But not for pleasure, I assure you. I have ceased to find pleasure in crowds."

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN Lorton and Elsworth reached Mrs. White's house, a half-hour later, they found that lady and her guests sitting about the tail end of one of her famous little midnight suppers. Young Dexter, on

the right of his hostess, was fumbling lingeringly over the tying of a bit of pink ribbon about her plump white wrist.

"I had very nearly given you up," she exclaimed. "What frauds you are!" She extended her left hand to Fred, and while he pressed it to his lips, she continued to Lorton:

"Come here, Algie, and sit beside me. I have a scolding in keeping for you!"

Lorton, after bowing over the hand of Miss Smiley, Mrs. White's sister, to whom he was flip-pantly presented *en passant*, took possession of the chair which young Dexter reluctantly vacated.

Fred seated himself near Miss Smiley, who was touching glasses with "Taddy" Mac Finn, one of Elsworth's wealthy protégés.

"Don't scold me," murmured Lorton in a tone of tender appeal. "I have come here for a little happiness after a burdensome day."

"You were at Mrs. Seymore's dinner, were you not?" asked Mrs. White, with a slight raising of her brows, "in company with the woman of your choice; what more can you want?"

"I wanted you all day. I always want you. Other women are nothing," whispered Lorton, recklessly. It was his habit with this woman to speak in this fashion. She laughed excitedly and raised a glass of punch to her lips.

"The flowers were lovely," she murmured, "but—flowers can't satisfy a woman forever."

Lorton leaned nearer. His hand, resting on the table, touched hers.

"What more do you desire?" he asked softly. "Anything in my power shall be yours."

There was a peculiar fragrance about her, a fragrance connected with moments,—rare in his life

now—of keen emotional delight. It drugged his senses.

She threw her head back, and looked at him between the half-closed lids of her long yellow eyes. The light shone upon her carmined lips, and the gold in her reddish hair.

"I want," she said excitedly, "*everything*! I want to kill the dull woman who will bear your name."

He remembered her once before in this wild mood. He remembered the effect she had upon him, and a return now of the same delirium made his brain whirl.

"Were you not bearing the name of another, no woman but you should bear mine," he whispered.

"That foolish and long-regretted step of mine is not irrevocable," returned Mrs. White, seizing her opportunity. "If I can keep him away from me four months longer he will have been absent three years, and then——"

Lorton sat up, and looked about him.

"It is devilish hot here," he said, "suppose we have one of the windows opened a little. Do you object?"

"No, not at all." And then Mrs. White began to study the stem of her glass. About her mouth there was a strange drawn expression.

CHAPTER V.

THE following Saturday, by the morning mail, Elizabeth received a check for five hundred dollars from a publisher for a serial story, which she had submitted and despaired of many months before. Naturally she was greatly elated, for Christmas was approaching, and for a long time it had been the

one wish of her heart to buy a black silk gown for her aunt, whose clothes were of necessity few and shabby. In her new-found joy the girl forgot everything, even Lorton, the Assembly, and Edgerton. She was conscious only of her buoyant health and youth, and the happiness born of appreciated merit.

It was early when she set out to make her purchase; and it was still early when, having secured every necessary detail, she left the shop, well satisfied and in happy anticipation of her aunt's pleasure.

She dreamed now of other money that would probably come for work upon which she was busy, and she planned a little summer trip with her aunt to some interesting spot. In her personal literary triumph there was a satisfaction that even the prospect of her marriage failed to equal.

At the corner of Twenty-fifth and Fifth avenue, Elizabeth's dream was dispelled and her heart sank under the weight of a sudden flood of reality. The cause of this was the sight of what appeared to be a familiarly clothed form, a familiar walk, and a familiar stoop of shoulders. The man approaching her, however, was not, as she had supposed, her *futur*, but her eyes had ceased to smile, and the imagined trip with her aunt was lost in the confusing haze of an uncertain future.

Something oppressed her. Life was no longer what it had been. The little joys, that a year ago would have appeared so great, were now of no effect.

"May I intrude upon the dream-spell which appears to render you blind to your friends?"

The words rose quite naturally above the turmoil of other thoughts. The fact that Edgerton was beside her was in no way surprising.

She offered her hand to him involuntarily, and said: "How are you?"

A slight radiance crossed her face, like a passing glow of late sunlight, and faded.

"Will you permit me to walk with you a little way?" he asked. "I have passed you twice and received not even a nod of recognition; but I forgive you, because——"

He paused, and added abruptly. "I looked for you last night. Were you not there?"

"Where?"

"At the Assembly."

"Oh no, I did not go."

"Ah!" For a moment Edgerton meditated in silence. "It was not up to the mark, last night," he continued. "There were quite a number of persons there one never heard of. I left early."

"Yes, I noticed many unfamiliar names in the published list. Who is Mrs. Robert White? She was spoken of as being very beautiful, and a great favorite."

Edgerton glanced at her curiously. The memory of a supper-table he had seen the night before, at which Mrs. White was seated, surrounded by Lorton, Elsworth and one or two more, crossed his mind.

"I believe she was a Miss Smiley, the daughter of the proprietor of a small hotel at Narragansett. She married Bob White, who is now living in California. She is among the newly-inscribed, and appears to be quite a favorite; among the men especially."

"If she is beautiful, and young, and good, why should she not have an entrée wherever her husband is received?" asked Elizabeth, pensively.

"These things mean so much to a woman."

"I agree with you," her companion acquiesced.

Then, after a moment of silence, he pursued, quietly :
"You do not care much for society, do you?"

Elizabeth looked toward a shop window.

"What do you mean by society?" she asked.

"Balls and dinners, and things of that sort."

"Yes, I do care for them; but have had very little opportunity to cultivate the taste." She laughed.

"I imagined you were somewhat above that," he said.

"Oh, but I'm not," with a slight raising of her fine brows, "and I don't consider the taste degrading. It seems to me much more belittling to succumb to the malady of egotism."

"Is there no other alternative?" asked Edgerton with a smile.

"Perhaps there is, but the only real safeguard against egotism is contact and sympathy with others. No work or interest in life can entirely protect a man who shuns society."

"Then society is not necessarily a wild whirl of balls and entertainments. I imagine you are speaking of it in a different sense."

Elizabeth appeared perplexed.

"Yes, of course," she said, "society means companionship and congenial intercourse. In New York there are more opportunities for this, I should think, than in most other cities."

"Would you be willing to brave the shallowness of society in order to find a few genial spirits?"

"I'm afraid you are satiated," she said, smiling, and directing toward him a quick side glance. "But you see I've known so little of it, I don't consider it shallow. A beautiful ball is like a stimulant to me; I love to feel myself one of the great crowd; to hear the music and see beautiful women; and to feel

that I am looking as well as clothes and happiness can make me."

She laughed gayly.

"I love the excitement of it; the pervading force of human affinity; the loss of identity in a harmonious mass. . . . But how can I judge?" she added, with a sudden change of tone. "I went into mourning after my fourth ball, and that has been so long ago I can scarcely remember."

"Then this is all a dream?" He was regarding her studiously. Her words and voice emphasized some mental relationship of which they were both vaguely conscious. She felt that she could confide anything to him; he felt that he had a right to ask everything. Elizabeth's lips, in spite of her recognition of the man's right to look into those secrets of her heart of which she herself was not yet cognizant, pronounced the one word: "Yes."

"I hope the reality will not disappoint you," he said. "You have the correct ideas, but I'm afraid the rest of us have not. Shall you go to Mrs. Worthington's dance on the twentieth?"

"I got cards; but I think not."

"But why?"

"Oh, you see I am so little known; and Mr. Lorton says a girl has not much chance of a good time at these big affairs if she starts out anew at my age, and knows so few men. *Débutantes* monopolize all the attention."

"But is Lorton not going?"

"I imagine so. He goes everywhere." She spoke quite naturally as if remarking upon a matter of course.

Edgerton's brows came together in a puzzled frown.

"Well, why could not he—— Oh, don't give it

up!" he added, changing quickly to a lighter tone, as he sprang up the steps to ring her bell. "You are sure to have a good time. That sort of talk is all nonsense. There are some sensible men left on the field!"

"You are very good," returned Elizabeth, laughing, "and you really tempt me to go and brave the consequences. . . . Good-bye," holding out her hand to him. "I shall think it over to-night."

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Lorton called on Elizabeth that evening, he appeared years older. There was, indeed, something almost feeble in his gait and manner. He was suffering terribly, and had been since, at one o'clock that morning, he had retired, jaded, and physically tortured, from the party of club associates with whom he had held revel. Nevertheless he made no reference to his distress. The hour when Elizabeth was to assume the rôle he had planned for her was not yet come; and it would be unwise to frighten her before she had bound herself irrevocably to his service. Yet, with all his care, he could not entirely conceal a certain irritability of temper, a tell-tale redness of the eyes, and a pinched pallor about the nostrils.

This was unfortunate, for Elizabeth was in one of her hyper-sensitive moods. Instinctively she perceived the blemishes in spite of the suavity of his manner. She was clad in black; a new, soft gown that was most becoming. Lorton, notwithstanding his wretchedness, recognized in her an independence that was new—an unconscious reliance upon her own strength, that he had never before noticed.

Being a man of the world, he understood this change to bode no good, and was consequently most careful. Despite his self-persuaded desire that she should not be spoiled by meeting with appreciation from others, the fact that others did appreciate her more, in one sense, than he did himself, was a secret source of satisfaction to him; though his preconceived plans for his own comfort were threatened by it.

He did not for an instant entertain any idea of a change in her attitude toward him, the obligation, from his point of view, being all on her side; but he did not wish even the slightest difficulty to arise. He hated difficulties. The gods, thus far, had guarded him against them and he did not propose to suffer any opposition in the last move of his squandered life.

Elizabeth's improved appearance, her tasteful clothes and brighter bearing were annoying to him. He preferred her as she had been in the beginning, robed always in a shabby gray cashmere, which seemed more suitable to the part she was to play as his wife. Now she was far too light-hearted, too good-looking, and too ambitious.

"To-morrow night is Mrs. Alcott's opera dinner, is it not?" he asked, turning his head with a characteristic jerk, and looking at her over his stiff, high collar.

Elizabeth's arm, bare to the elbow, lay upon the table by which she was sitting. She listlessly opened and closed a small volume of poems. A soft glow fell upon her bowed head from the lamp above.

"Yes," she replied, without raising her eyes.

"I'm afraid I sha'n't be able to accompany you to the opera," said Lorton.

Elizabeth looked up in surprise.

"What?" she asked, "you are not going?"

Lorton's brows contracted.

"Of course," he returned, irritably, "I shall attend the dinner. Don't be stupid; I've accepted the invitation. But I have an engagement that will prevent my remaining for the opera."

Elizabeth closed the book and pressed it hard. "Is your engagement very important?" she asked. He did not answer. He simply stared at her in savage astonishment. After a moment, she raised her head and stared straight back at him. Her lower lip quivered slightly, and the pupils of her eyes had become large and dark, but otherwise she was quite calm.

"Could you not break it?" she questioned, with unusual persistence.

"I don't understand. This is something new!" returned Lorton, with ill-concealed anger, and a sudden ugly contraction of his lips.

"No, it is not new," said the girl, sitting straight up and pressing her hands tightly together in her lap. "This will be the third time, since our engagement was announced, that I have been seen without you at functions to which we were both invited."

"And what of that?" demanded Lorton, scarcely able to control himself. "Is there any crime in it?"

"No, there is no crime," said Elizabeth, rising; "only an exhibition of indifference."

She stood above him, cold and pale, fingering the lampshade.

"What do you mean?" he asked, frigidly.

She turned about and faced him impetuously. "I mean," she replied, "that by your absence upon such occasions you not only place me in a very em-

barrassing position—for, as you informed me the other day, the compliment is intended more for you than for me—but the world is given to understand that it is a matter of indifference to you what I do or where I go.”

“How ridiculous! Do you suppose a man of my age is expected, like a boy of twenty, to dance attendance upon the woman he marries? Preposterous! Besides, I care nothing for what the world says or thinks.”

“But I care, Algernon.”

Lorton arose.

“Listen, Elizabeth,” he said, with a suave self-restraint more exasperating than an outburst of anger. “This is a new departure of yours, and one that I do not much fancy; so it had better be nipped in the bud. In the beginning of the winter you had none of these notions. It’s all this confounded going-out business. You’ve had your head turned. It would have been far better had you never begun it. I am not a boy. You knew that when you decided to marry me; and, if you are to be my wife, you must put these ideas out of your head at once and for all. I can’t be controlled by childish whims, and I do not mean to be.”

The firmly dogmatic tone in which all this was said affected Elizabeth with an inward tremor that was almost like the awakening of a minor passion.

It was rare that he aroused real emotion in her, and for this reason the sensation was all the more impressive. A woman’s nature, when ignorant of passion’s deepest meaning, is like a new-strung harp whose cords lie slack, every passing breath setting them a-quiver with false sound and unharmonious vibration. Elizabeth fancied the subordinate perturbation stirred within her by his words to be the

manifestation of a deep-lying love. For an instant she was tempted to go to him and lay her head penitently upon his shoulder; but instead she found herself saying quietly: "If you do not go, Algernon, I shall not."

"Very well, let it rest so," he returned, as he paced to the mirror and arranged his scarf; "it will be much the better way."

Elizabeth looked at him. Then she seated herself and took up the book of poems.

Her heart had suddenly begun to beat wildly. She hated herself because she felt that it was unreasonable temper that possessed her. Perhaps he was right. He was much older than she, and no doubt it was stupid of her to expect of him all that she would have demanded from a younger man. He understood these things better; and, besides, his life had been so long rooted in certain grooves that it would be idle to attempt to change his views and habits.

When she had become calmer, she looked over to where he stood by a table, turning the leaves of a photograph album, cherished, in spite of modern ideas, by her rather conservative aunt. His back was quite broad, she noticed, and his neck somewhat too thick and red. The light from the lamp fell upon his sleek head. In the dead silence she could hear the creak of his shirt-front as he breathed. It seemed to accentuate a keen foresight of their future intimate relations. Her eyes opened wide. She listened to it with indescribable terror.

In him she beheld a controlling power; a weight that must forever bind her wings down. As he turned the pages she could see his hand, small and well-shaped, and marked by knotty, overcharged veins; a hand that bespoke an insignificant and

selfish history, and seemed endowed with an individual self-consciousness and pride in its polished nails, immaculate cuff, and irreproachable ring. She studied him from head to foot; his faultless apparel and the fine proportions of his pampered person. She wondered what were the inward conditions of the man at that moment.

Then she glanced about the shabby little room, and her heart warmed with a sudden sense of the incongruity of his presence. He was a perfect specimen of that set of men whom she had since childhood accepted as her ideal. Her ignorance of the sex and her limited experience had permitted this ideal to grow up with her. She had had no opportunity, through the means of comparison, to understand its true substance, and she judged the man she was to marry more by the accepted standard of that world she craved through inheritance than by any natural intuition.

In exchange for the ignominious solitude of poverty she was to obtain, by marrying Algernon Lorton, a foremost seat in the courts of the Golden Ass; and, with this, the esteem and sympathy that had been so long withheld. She was willing and eager to welcome this world of sycophants, for, so far, she had had no experience of other worlds by which she might measure the shallowness of it.

Within her throbbed the buoyant spirit of her mother, a social queen, although a woman who had learned more and judged better at twenty-eight than did her unsophisticated daughter.

As she looked upon Lorton she asked herself why this new spirit of dissatisfaction had come to her. Was it true that she had been spoiled? He was giving her so much; surely she could afford to be a little lenient and good-tempered! Under the influ-

ence of these thoughts, she rose and went over to him.

"Who is this?" he asked, indicating the photograph of a handsome woman in the dress of twenty years back.

"That is my mother. Aunt Katherine says it is not very good of her. She died when I was eight."

Lorton was gazing fixedly at the picture. He raised it and looked more closely.

"She was very beautiful," he said, in a thoughtful way.

"Did you know her?" asked Elizabeth, with interest.

"Yes—quite well. I had forgotten."

He closed the book and turned away. His face was grave and somewhat sad.

"Twenty years!" he said; then he forced a laugh and took Elizabeth's hands. "I'm getting on, little girl, more's the pity."

His face clouded again as he looked down upon her; and Elizabeth, gazing back into his eyes, beheld far in their depths a new shadowed softness that made her heart throb. She placed her hand caressingly upon his shoulder and laid her head there.

"You will never be too old for me," she said.

He stood silent. Not even his hands stirred. A spasm of feeling crossed his face like the shadow of a cloud crossing still water.

"Will you kiss me?" he asked.

She raised her head. For an instant he studied her. Then the memory passed, and he laid his lips coldly upon her brow. In his eyes as he took her hand from his shoulder there was a cynical smile.

"Good-night, dear," he said; "I must be off. My respects to your aunt. I shall call for you to-morrow night at seven."

When he was in the street he walked slowly, with bowed head. He paused at the corner for a wagon to pass. But for some moments after the wagon had gone by he stood gazing at the curb. People hustled by him. Three gay pedestrians nudged one another as they passed him, and one murmured audibly, "Full!"

Then he raised his head, took a long breath, and directed his steps toward his club.

CHAPTER VII.

THE Duke della Torrina was appointed the following evening at Mrs. Alcott's to take Elizabeth in to dinner. He was a small, shining Italian, with restless black eyes and very pointed mustachios. He talked spasmodically between the courses, seasoning his decidedly reckless remarks with flagrant flattery, while his eager glances danced from one to another of the women present with calculating astuteness. Almost directly opposite sat Edgerton with a young millionairess, whom his Grace had doubtless already appraised, for his gaze ever returned to her little sallow face. Lorton was submitting as gracefully as possible to the vapid babble of Mrs. Featherweight, who had but lately emerged from a two years' retirement, imposed by the death of her young husband. What she was saying he scarcely heeded, but so effectual had been his long training in dealing with social products such as she that he was able to fill in with an appropriate remark the spaces when she paused for breath.

His thoughts, however, really had to do with how he might best brace himself against the subtle wiles of Mrs. White, whom he expected to find

later in a reckless mood. Already he saw the long, tiger-like eyes gleaming with restrained fires, and he heard that bewitching, modulated voice uttering its daring speeches, its clever badinage. Every second while with her he seemed subjected to some new sensation. Every glance of her eyes, every word from her lips, appeared to stir within him some new fibre of emotional ecstasy. To a man of his age, satiated with the best society could offer, this was a boon of no inconsiderable value. He had condemned Bob White as a fool when first he had learned of his marriage, and he had joined in the mocking chorus of "I told you so!" when the news came of White's sudden departure for the West, for he had long ago persuaded himself that Cora White was not a woman that any man could, with safety, make his wife. In his private lexicon she came under the head of "exquisite luxuries." Such women he regarded as a necessity in that they leaven the dull routine of modern existence, but they are not to be made wives of.

Now Mrs. White imposed no obligation, which was a very great advantage. She could be taken on and thrown off as a garment; and there was about her, moreover, a vague atmosphere of danger that was particularly attractive to a man of Lorton's type.

With Cora, he forgot himself; and that was something he never did under any other influence.

"One always has such a jolly time at Mrs. Worthington's," babbled the widow Featherweight. "It seems such an age since I've sipped champagne on the stairs that even the anticipation of it makes me feel quite like a little girl again!"

Lorton joined mechanically in the giggle with which she followed this brilliant sally, and remarked

that, as it was, she was nothing more than a little girl when compared with him and the majority of those present.

Mrs. Featherweight's limpid blue eyes surveyed the table, and rested upon Elizabeth.

"You forget your fiancée," she said, "she probably is younger."

Lorton glanced at his bride-elect, whose pale aristocratic face was at that moment twitching in the effort to control a contemptuous smile provoked by an observation of her dinner partner. As he looked at her he was impressed, more forcibly than ever before, by an element in her face that was unfamiliar to him. It was something strongly in contrast with the faces to which he was accustomed. It was an element composed partly of self-oblivion, and partly of that careful reflectiveness born of a nature wholly devoid of vanity and ignoble impulses.

In that instant it irritated him. He avoided meeting her eyes.

"I believe I can never become reconciled to this match," said the widow.

"What match?" he asked, heedlessly.

"Why, you and Miss Thorley, of course. That is the matrimonial affair of the hour!"

"Indeed?"

"You seem so entirely unsympathetic: so—I should have expected you to marry a bright, vivacious sort of woman. Miss Thorley appears cold to me. She is good-looking, but cold, cold. She is the last person in the world one would expect to appeal to you."

"I think you are scarcely capable of judging, since you know her so slightly," returned Lorton stiffly.

"Oh, you needn't be disagreeable about it!" said Mrs. Featherweight, pertly. "I haven't passed

twelve years in the same city with you without learning most of your tastes and weaknesses."

"No?"

"Now you're cross!" Leaning near to him with an appealing glance: "Why are you cross?"

"I'm not in the least cross, I assure you." And Lorton gave his attention to the entrée before him. As a matter of fact, the opinions of the widow were a matter of utter indifference to him.

"We are to hear the divine Eames to-night," said Edgerton. He had gone up to Elizabeth the moment that he and the other men entered the drawing-room.

Elizabeth bowed her head, fingering a gold snake that encircled her arm.

"Eames, as *Elsa*, is something really worth hearing. "I am intensely fond of 'Lohengrin,' aren't you?"

The girl's face flushed a little.

"I have never heard it," she said, looking up impetuously.

A flash of amazement, quickly controlled, came into her companion's eyes.

"Then I envy you to-night," he said, softly. "The delight of hearing it the first time is something one can never forget."

"But I am not going to-night," said Elizabeth, quickly, avoiding his eyes.

The astonishment in Edgerton's face was now clearly apparent.

"Not going?" he ejaculated. "Why, surely Mrs. Alcott told me you were to accompany us."

"Yes; I had expected to, but—circumstances have arisen that make it impossible."

"Conditions of so serious a nature that they cannot be removed?" he asked, studying her averted face, keenly.

"Yes."

"That's too bad," he said reflectively.

The mandolins, concealed somewhere in the hall, were playing, "Oh, Thou Sublime Evening Star." The vibrating strains softly penetrated the room's low hum of conversation.

"I have looked forward all day to hearing this opera with you," Edgerton said after a pause. He had surprised in her eyes an expression she had intended to hide. A slight moisture about the lower lid, a burning expansion of the pupils expressed the spirit of disappointment and revolt.

She leaned back, and drew a quick breath.

"It is very good of you," she said, more coldly than she intended, because of an effort to steady her voice.

He looked at her with pitiless persistence, and a deep color mounted to her brow.

"Why is it I did not meet you before?" he asked.

"It makes me savage with Fate."

The significance of his tone was not lost upon Elizabeth, although so new to her. She was at a loss how to reply, but fearing to appear childish, and realizing more clearly than ever before, her ignorance of social parlance, she laughed a little, and looked straight into his eyes.

"It is unfair to attack with such subtle flattery," she said, reprovingly.

"It is not flattery, Miss Thorley," he returned with gravity. "You are the only woman I have ever met whom I should lack the courage to flatter."

"The tribute is very—gratifying," said Elizabeth, with some confusion.

"Do you believe in its sincerity?" he asked, in the same subdued and intense tone.

"Yes."

She uttered only this one word because his attitude frightened her. She was beset by a vague uncertainty as to whether it was right for her to permit him to speak in this fashion and as to whether he secretly criticised her for permitting it.

"You, with your sweet individual understanding of things," said Edgerton, "coming suddenly into this vast *bal masqué* of society, cannot realize what a relief your advent is to one who is heartily tired of the artificiality of it all."

"Why do you continue to go out, if society is so distasteful to you?" asked his companion, in a tone so calm that it savored of reproof.

Edgerton looked perplexed.

"Because, as you said yourself the other day, association with one's equals is essential to comfortable and intelligent existence," he said, at last.

"But a man is not obliged to attend social functions in order to obtain that. You have the society of your clubs, the *camaraderie* that we women never enjoy."

"The society of a clever and natural-minded woman is necessary to the happiness of every man," returned her companion, in the same gentle tone, "and she is rarely to be met with in the sphere of society."

"I see Mrs. Alcott is making a move to prepare for the opera," said Elizabeth a little nervously, dreading instinctively a continuance of this conversation, that had already begun to exert a charm over her.

"It's a wretched shame you are not going," murmured Edgerton with real regret as he arose with her.

"But there are to be other operas, and this one

again," said Elizabeth, smiling. "I think I should like to begin by hearing the 'Ring of the Nibelung.'"

Edgerton turned quickly, his face brightening. "Will you permit me to take you to them?" he asked eagerly.

Elizabeth was startled. She was indefinably conscious of some obscure cogency plotting against her.

"That would not be possible, Mr. Edgerton," she said, hearing the words echo upon her senses as though they were uttered by another in a futile effort to oppose some inexorable force, in the action of which she was in some way complicated.

"But why?" he persisted, as they slowly crossed the room. "Other engaged girls do that sort of thing, you know. Music is an excuse in itself. Lorton is not much of a devotee at her shrine, so there is no use subjecting him to an ordeal."

She looked up into the handsome face turned toward her appealingly. For an instant her senses were dulled as though under the influence of some opiate. She felt her lips stirring in an involuntary smile which she realized was particularly weak.

At the same time she beheld Lorton approaching her, and in the familiarity of his form and face—a familiarity connected with a part of her life entirely distinct from this new emotion—she awoke quickly to an appreciation of his proprietorship in her. An effervescence of spirit, that had been rising slowly during the evening, fell flat. She was disagreeably sensible of every line and crease in his face, as she regarded him. In the red lights of his dark eyes she seemed to recognize, as she had never before, a dominating and tyrannical temper lurking beneath his suave exterior.

A sudden sense of antagonistic fear made the blood flow back coldly upon her heart.

"Shall I propose it to him?"

The voice uttering these words penetrated her senses with something of the same intangible impression as the vague reflection of a dream.

"No, please don't," she replied involuntarily, and with haste.

"Then will you let me make it a party of four?" asked Edgerton hurriedly.

"That would be delightful," returned Elizabeth as her fiancé joined them.

"Then it's decided," said Edgerton. "You won't forget! The Ring begins the night following the Charity Ball. Will that be convenient for you, Lorton?"

"Convenient for what?" asked that individual, wearily.

"I'm going to give a *partie carrée* to hear the 'Nibelung,' in honor of Miss Thorley; just she and you and I, and any one else you like."

"That's good of you," returned Lorton, indifferently, "but why opera? We have so much of that."

"Miss Thorley has never heard the 'Ring.'"

"Well, that's something to be proud of," said Lorton, patronizingly, "and it's a comfort to feel there is one woman in the community not daft about a senseless conglomeration of sounds conceived by a mad German. This mania for Wagnerian opera is either an affectation, or the contagion of some mental malady conveyed through sound!"

He laughed softly, with self-gratification, when he had given voice to this worthy hypothesis.

"You are to be congratulated, Elizabeth," he added.

"Wait until I have heard the operas," returned

Elizabeth; "perhaps you will find my mind is also susceptible to the malady."

"Then for heaven's sake don't go," said Lorton, his brows knitting irritably. "Take us to a variety show, Edgerton—anything but opera—and I shall join you with pleasure."

"Oh, what a barbarian you are!" whined the widow Featherweight, who had joined them. "Imagine being callous to that lovely Rhine daughter's song! *Weia! Waga! Wolla! dum, dum!*" She sang in an effort to imitate the song of *Woglinde*.

"Well, shall I understand that the party is on for the tenth?" said Edgerton, as the party started to leave the room.

"It must be opera?" asked Lorton.

"Yes, you'll have to endure Wagner, if you come," returned the other, with a peculiar laugh.

"Well, please ask some one not absolutely music-mad as my companion," urged Elizabeth's affianced, as they left the drawing-room together, "or I shall not be able to sit through it."

"I shall search the highways and byways, but I know of none other than Miss Thorley whom you would consider came under that head, unless it is Mrs. Bob White."

Lorton glanced up quickly, but Edgerton's face was a blank.

CHAPTER VIII.

LORTON's first words as he entered Mrs. White's Turkish room, an hour later, were:

"Tell me, do you appreciate Wagner?"

"How strange you are!" she replied, as she turned slowly from the mirror before which she

was standing, arranging a small ornament in her hair.

Her arms were raised, and the full sleeves of her closely-fitting black chiffon gown, thrown back by the posture, revealed their round gleaming whiteness. In pose and appearance she was maddeningly seductive. Her movements were languid, possessing the subtle grace of a woman who knows her power, and means to exert it.

"It is a true sign of degenerating intelligence when a man is obliged to resort to eccentricity to prove his identity."

Lorton measured her with admiring eyes.

"Don't be cross," he said, "and spoil the sweet atmosphere of this room. Jove! the very coloring of it is like a refreshing draught." And he looked about the softly-lighted apartment, every appointment of which was artfully calculated to pander to his sybaritic propensities.

"Well, don't let it go to your head, my boy," returned his hostess, lightly. "Come and sit over here." She led him to a richly-pillowed divan, from which the glowing fire in the open grate could be comfortably watched.

"What's this about Wagner? Do I like it? No. I hate all opera! For my part, I agree with Voltaire—What is too stupid to be spoken, is sung!"

Lorton laughed, and took one of her hands between his.

"What a blessing it is I have you to comfort me," he said.

The lady laid her other soft hand above his.

"What is it, Algie?" she questioned, tenderly. "What is fretting you? Has the fair Elizabeth discovered a new Essex?"

"No such——" began Lorton, significantly, but

the gentleman in him forbade his finishing the sentence. Instead he said, "Do you know, I really think existence would be a much easier affair if people didn't look upon matrimony as such a serious matter. What is it, after all, but an accepted formula of conventional ruling?"

"I have found it something more serious than that," returned Mrs. White, raising her faultless eyebrows with languid expressiveness, and clasping her large white hands loosely in her lap.

"Yes, but you don't let it absorb and sour all that is best in you as most women do," replied her companion. "You married for convenience—the only reasonable way to enter matrimony, if one doesn't want it to serve as a prosaic finale to life's effervescence."

"I must say I cannot see the wisdom of tying one's self to one man for any reason," said Mrs. White with a slight accent of impatience. "If a woman loves the man she marries, inevitably he wearies of her. If she marries a man without loving him some fiend sows in her heart an unconquerable passion for another. The surest consequence of a *mariage de convenance* is a secret love."

The intensity with which these words were spoken, expressed an abandon to individual emotion that could not but stir a responding chord in the man by her side.

He leaned over, and again laid his warm hand upon hers.

"And what better consequence could there be?" he asked. "A secret love is the quintessence of mutual attraction. Passion is like a pool of water: if given an easy outlet it rushes wildly away to the chasm of annihilation, leaving only mud behind it; but if suppressed it either stagnates and breeds

unwholesome germs, or is absorbed by an harmonious element and carried to a higher sphere. This last is its most perfect condition and is created by what you call a secret love."

She looked at him steadily for an instant; her long pale eyes narrowed a little.

Then she drew one of her hands away, and lifted the sleek hair softly from his brow.

"That is a very clever simile," she said. "Often you startle me with your thoughts. You are so unlike other men, Algie. There is something satisfying about you, while they are only dull and brutal."

He drew her hand down from his brow, to his lips, and held it there.

"You are the only woman who ever inspires me to superior thought," he whispered with a certain self-complacency. "In your presence I feel the necessity of keener and more elevated mental effort."

She leaned her head upon his shoulder, so that their faces touched.

"With ideas so correct and beautiful as yours, how can you want to mar the possibilities of a love like ours by marrying?" she asked. "You say you do not love this girl. Then why burden yourself with the responsibilities of her?"

"Because I wish to perpetuate my relations with you. I mean in all their purity and strength," he returned softly. "My wife will serve as——"

"What?" she asked, and he felt the warmth of her vitality, wrought to a point of electric intensity, stirring his senses.

The idea of annoying her appeared to him, in this instant, as a deadly calamity, and yet his better nature prevented his finishing the sentence he had begun.

"What?" she persisted in the peremptory tone

women often assume toward men whose fatuity of devotion has secretly undermined their respect. "Why don't you finish?"

In her tone he recognized a dominating power and the very nerves of his body relaxed in a sort of emotional subserviency to her control.

"I was merely going to say that the fact of my being married will prolong the pleasure of our love," he finished, lamely. "Someone—Pascal, wasn't it?—has said '*tant plus le chemin est long dans l'amour tant plus un esprit délicat sent de plaisir*,' and mine is *un esprit délicat*."

"And mine?" exclaimed the fair Cora, sitting up, her eyes flashing with sudden anger. "Is it nothing that I am to be subjected to the world's ridicule by seeing this woman bearing your name, holding the highest place in your consideration, at least in her opinion and that of the world? Is love so mean a thing that you acknowledge no responsibility toward it?"

He looked at her, and some almost imperceptible change came into his eyes.

"What would you have me do? Marry you?" he asked, quietly; and feeling, as he had done at other times, a vague and indescribable sense of repugnance because of some dimly perceived coarseness underlying the woman's momentary loss of control.

She was not slow to recognize the significance of the peculiarly penetrating light that had so suddenly hardened his glance; and she regretted instantly having revealed even so slightly the talons of her real nature.

She had made one grave mistake in her life by marrying a man whom she had thought a Croesus only to find, when too late, that he was merely the

possessor of a comfortable income, and entirely obnoxious to her.

Her ambition was, and always had been, to enter the ranks of the American nobility, the phenomenally rich. Lorton was a phenomenon of wealth, and he was indisputably well-born.

The thought that this girl, Elizabeth Thorley, of whom so few people seemed to know anything, had walked in and, without any effort, attained the object over which she had spent so many hours of study and calculation, so many torturous moments of self-control and subtle scheming, was indeed bitter. Should she allow it to terminate in marriage, it would mean an end to her career.

Cora was already thirty-four. She was both too far advanced in years and too well known among the men of her community to hope for the early development of another advantageous liaison. Should Lorton marry, she, the hotel-keeper's daughter, would be forced to retire beaten, and subside into the mediocrity she despised.

As these thoughts passed rapidly through her mind, she set her little white teeth and mentally vowed that she would not be defeated.

"I must keep my head," she said to herself again and again, while her companion lay back among the pillows in emotional comfort, passing the warm, soft palm of her hand back and forth upon his lips,

With all the might of her artificially trained nature, Cora forced back the spleen of her personal irritation. This man must not guess that his plaything had fangs. No, not yet!

Suddenly Lorton paused in the action that engaged him, and leaned near to her.

"Marry?" she whispered, as his head came close to her bosom so that, in speaking, her lips softly

stirred upon his throbbing temple, "no, no; that would spoil all this sweet heaven! . . . But why need either of us marry? Why not remain just as we are?"

He looked up into her fair rounded face. His eyes burned with the red light Elizabeth was beginning to dread. Now it blazed hot as a live coal.

"You ask too much," he said huskily. "Were you free and I, Cora, not all your argument could make me content to remain in this relation to you."

He was conscious of the flash of her pale eyes, of words uttered that he did not comprehend, of a hand passing over his face; of . . .

CHAPTER IX.

ELIZABETH did not have the difficulty she had expected in persuading Lorton to take her to the Charity Ball. Two mediums had, all unknown to her, served her in this. One of these was the explicit wish of Lorton's sister, Mrs. Hodson Monroe, that Elizabeth should be present at a dinner she was giving that night, and join the box-party that was to follow; and the other was that Mrs. White had expressed a persistent desire to see her.

The girl looked unusually well, in pure white, with American Beauty roses. The music and brilliancy of the ballroom invariably acted upon her as a tonic. As she entered Mrs. Monroe's box she did not appear to be a day over nineteen, and immediately innumerable glasses were directed toward her from all parts of the house.

From the maze of dancers below a pair of brilliant eyes were fixed upon her, expressing wonderment, tinged with fear. Cora White knew nearly

every one else, by sight at least, in the box, save this tall, splendid-looking girl with classic features.

"Which is she?" she asked of Lorton, with whom she had been dancing.

She spoke carelessly, but her heart sank with a conviction that she had already discovered the woman who was so easily to take her place in the favor of this desirable Cræsus.

"She is on the right; in white, with red roses. Looks decidedly well, too, by Jove!"

"I thought you said she was not—that she was plain," said Cora, whose lips had contracted painfully, and the lower lids of whose eyes rose a little because of the sting in her eyes.

"I don't think I ever saw her very distinctly before this moment," returned Lorton, pensively.

Cora forced a laugh.

"How delicious you are!" she exclaimed. "Come, take me out of this crush."

Then, when they had moved beyond the crowd, she added: "She is older than I thought; that is a pity. A woman, when she once gets that set look in her face, is very intolerant and limited in her views. Your Elizabeth looks to me like a woman with theories, and—cherished principles, and all that. The name suits her well—austere and prim. Am I right?"

She leaned forward to look into his face coquettishly, and with a sudden change of tone, dreading lest she had gone too far.

"No, I don't think she is prim," returned Lorton quietly, "she has her ideas upon some subjects, but she is not stubborn; and I must say I fail to see any set expression in her face. She certainly has shown no intolerance toward me."

"Not now. Why should she, after winning a

matrimonial prize? I am glad to learn she is clever, for she evidently has concealed from you the strong will her mouth expresses."

"I like a woman to have a strong will," he said, rather testily.

Cora looked down; one of her hands was clenched. She did not dare speak. If he attempted to defend this girl, or sing her praises, she felt that she should kill him. But she was far too clever to reveal this.

What she suffered must be concealed under a never-failing succession of pleasant sensations. In this way she meant to protect herself against the awakening of his reason, and to keep him as much as possible from Elizabeth.

"I always considered you a superior man," she said, reflectively, as they proceeded to a more secluded spot, "but in this last departure you have proved yourself a very Hercules of courage."

Lorton glanced at her.

"I don't understand," he said.

Cora smiled.

"No?" she remarked, interrogatively. "Do you mean to say you are rushing in blindly where angels fear to tread?"

"Please don't talk in riddles; I hate them."

Cora sank upon the embowered seat toward which she had led him.

"Algernon," she said, with gravity, "sometimes I think experience has taught you very little in some respects. Any man of your age who attempts to enter the trying field of matrimony carelessly deserves all the discomfort that is bound to be the consequence."

"If I have been dull under the teachings of experience," returned her companion, quietly, "you cer-

tainly appear' to have learned little of my nature during the course of our acquaintance."

"The brightest meteor, having fallen to ground, is but a stone," returned Cora, without looking at him.

The remark caused him the pleasure that reproof from a younger woman is apt to cause a man of advanced years—a pleasure he experienced only with Cora White.

He glanced at her comprehensively. Then deliberately he took her hand.

"I have not yet fallen, Cora," he said. "What I mean to do will not in any way alter my life, so far as you are concerned."

"Ah, you believe that, but it is not true," returned his companion, with a little laugh. "Matrimony is the sunset of love, as some one has wisely said, and even your feeling for me will be embittered by the fretting of your nature under the bonds that bind you to a woman you cannot love."

He kissed her arm, and held his lips for a full moment to the white warmth of it. Through the persuasion of his falsely educated senses he understood this to cause delight. His fancy-stimulated nerves vibrated beneath an imaginary emotion, the result of a long-pampered artificiality of sensuousness. It was the nearest to genuine emotion he had ever experienced, even in youth.

"You shall see," he whispered. "I am not a boy, Cora; I don't do things with my eyes shut."

She laid her hand upon his bowed head, letting her fingers play gently with the hair on his brow. Her eyes, partly closed, gleamed with an expression of angry calculation. Her lips twitched.

"It must be finished between us," she said, after a moment. "When you are married, Algernon, I go out of your life forever. It is just as well, per-

haps. You ought to be settled, dear boy, and as for me—I'm beginning to feel a little restless. I want to be off somewhere; I'm tired of this place."

Lorton sat upright. He felt that he should be distressed and piqued because of her words, and, consequently, he was.

"What nonsense you are talking!" he said, half reproachfully. "I have always respected you above all other women because you are not controlled by the follies of conventional limitations. Don't make me feel that you are no better than the others."

Mrs. White laid her hand on his shoulder, and, leaning forward so that her breath fanned his cheek, she said in a low, constrained voice: "I cannot serve as a *pis aller*, Algernon. I am human, remember that; and—I am a woman."

The expression of her splendid eyes, the tone of her voice, drove the color from his face. She was the queen of his imagination, the pivot upon which, for the time being, the wheel of his fancy turned, causing a fictitious excitement which long acceptance had endowed with the semblance of true passion. He drew a quick breath and leaned closer to her.

"For God's sake," he whispered, "don't make me regret this step I have taken any more than——"

As he paused she laughed.

"What a coward you are!" she said, with scorn.

He imagined himself much excited, and pressed her hand fiercely between his own.

"Take care," he whispered; "I can endure a good deal, but you must know that my love for you is no ordinary——"

"Here," said the voice of Elizabeth, just the other side of the decorative shrubbery. "This looks delightfully quiet, but—is it not a little——"

Cora had made a quick movement, bringing her white arm into the bend of his.

Lorton for the moment was deaf and blind to all but her, and consequently when his fiancée and Edgerton appeared his position was decidedly compromising. Elizabeth backed instantly with a little apologetic exclamation. She was breathing quickly from the unwonted exercise of dancing; and the beauty of her face was enhanced by a slight flush, faint as the inner side of a seashell.

Lorton arose precipitantly when he appreciated her presence.

"Introduce her," whispered Cora, quickly, in an undertone.

"Elizabeth," he said obediently, "I want to present you to Mrs. White. She has expressed a desire to meet you."

As he spoke he was vaguely conscious of the loveliness of this young creature who was to become his wife; as a man whose sensibilities are half obliterated with drink, returning from a night's orgie dimly appreciates the dawning splendor of a day he is to squander in sleep.

The fact that they were betrothed came upon him suddenly, in that instant, with almost ludicrous impressiveness. He seemed like one in a dream; and although he comprehended Edgerton's presence he did not look at him.

"I have been so anxious to know you," purred Mrs. White, taking the girl's hand and holding it as she studied her face eagerly for any sign of crow's feet; "you know I take a great interest in you."

"Yes?" Elizabeth regarded her in a manner at once perplexed and questioning. "It is very good of you."

Cora's slender lips tightened.

"Yes, isn't it?" she said, and laughed significantly, glancing past Elizabeth at Edgerton, who stood sternly silent behind her. "But you will learn that I am a woman of staunch feelings, when you know me better. I never change or permit any conditions to change me." She laughed again, this time softly, and looked straight into Elizabeth's eyes.

The girl responded nervously to the laugh, not understanding; and glanced appealingly towards Lorton.

"This is such an attractive spot," she said to relieve the situation; "I wonder if there is another place vacant containing seats."

When she and Edgerton moved away neither spoke for the space of a minute, then Elizabeth said: "I think I had rather sit in some place not quite so secluded."

"We might go over there to those seats," returned Edgerton, "they would be out of the crowd. Should you care to do that?"

"Yes. Let us go there."

A change had come over their light-hearted mood. They talked at random for some time, seeming engaged by their own thoughts.

Each felt the other's absent-mindedness, and vaguely understood the reason of it.

"To-morrow evening we are to have our opera party, remember," said Edgerton, some time later when they had started leisurely to rejoin Mrs. Monroe in her box.

"Oh, I have not forgotten," returned his companion, sincerely. "I have been looking forward to it so eagerly."

Edgerton gazed at the floor.

"It will bore Lorton horribly, I expect," he re-

marked, pensively. Then he added in the same thoughtful tone: "That is an element in your betrothal that I can't be reconciled to."

"What?"

"Your different ideas about music."

"Oh!" she laughed softly. "I have never hoped to marry a man who would wholly sympathize with me on that subject."

"But why not?"

"Because—few men ever do feel deeply about it."

"I think you are mistaken," returned Edgerton. "My experience has shown me that men are quite as appreciative of good music as women. To me the love of music is an accurate index to temperament. It indicates the trend of individual passions; for there is no finer, nor more sublime, passion than that awaked by music."

Elizabeth looked up at him quickly, then far away. In the instant of silence that followed they were both conscious, simultaneously, of an indefinable mental shock.

Elizabeth grew faint. Then a warm glow of emotional feeling stole over her, a sense of being brought into touch with some irresistible attraction existing between this man and herself. His words appeared to open a new medium of sympathy by which their natures attained suddenly a more intimate relation.

Neither spoke. From a distance the soft strains of the violins reached them pulsing with the passion of their creator's mind; and, mingled with these, was the scent of innumerable dying flowers. They became conscious, with an intensity of sensuous appreciation, of their corporal juxtaposition, and of the distant music.

They ceased to think. Upon the emotional

vacancy of their minds some one sensation continued to rise and fall with the beating of their hearts, like a bubble on the heaving breast of a storm-threatened sea.

The whole of their separate entities was bent upon comprehending this sensation which evaded them, as the bubble might evade a hand that would grasp it.

CHAPTER X.

LORTON had already reached the box and was in conversation with Mrs. Spectre when Elizabeth and her companion approached.

"What folly of Edgerton to keep her so long in that throng!" he said with some show of irritation.

"If you want a donkey without faults, you must go on foot, my dear," returned his cousin as she tried to comprehend the reason of Elizabeth's half-frightened, yet peculiarly happy, expression.

"I did not wish her to go down there at all," Lorton went on half to himself; "it was most unseemly."

Something told him that the fact of her being with another man dancing in that heterogeneous crowd was a reflection upon him.

"Then why in Job's name didn't you see to it that she did not go?" Mrs. Spectre demanded, impatiently. "She is no puppet, Algernon. Only a blind and unreasoning love could bring the will back of that brow and chin to submissiveness. You don't understand the girl, my boy. That love is not there, yet; but be careful! Some other may plant it before you have sense enough to appreciate the wealth of the ground."

Lorton laughed lightly.

"You are always so delightfully romantic, cousin," he said, indulgently, "but be at peace. That possibility does not trouble me in the least."

"Oh, don't be too sure, my boy," returned Mrs. Spectre. "What I say is true. You have got far more than you deserve in winning this girl; and I should advise you not to feel so secure. Don't let her get a taste for peaches, Algernon, for the immortal Eliot never said anything truer than that to a person whose mouth is watering for a peach there is no use offering the largest vegetable-marrow."

Lorton smiled with amusement and confidence.

"Let us hope," he said, "that as the humble vegetable-marrow was first to appeal to her taste, the conditions can be reversed."

Elizabeth's eyes met his as he spoke, and again she was conscious of some moral dissatisfaction. Edgerton also looked at him, his eyes keenly critical. Then he abruptly turned his attention to Mrs. Spectre. Elizabeth stood, with one hand resting upon the velvet rim of the box, looking down upon the whirling throng below.

Although her eyes were blind to what they looked upon and her ears deaf to the ceaseless babble of voices, her senses were peculiarly and intensely alive. The music, soft and sensuous, added to the extraordinary excitement in her blood. She was experiencing a delirium of mind that was novel, and that made all things appear unreal. A strange unhappiness settled upon her, accompanied by a lethargic abandonment to the influences of the moment that was uncontrollable.

Now and then certain notes pierced her with ecstatic pain. . . . Her mind became deliriously vacant. . . . Before it arose a pale, fair face, whose blue eyes and slender lips smiled with menacing

cynicism, then passed. . . . She roused herself and attempted to follow the music,—to disentangle it from the sound of a voice behind her. Only her new identity was conscious of that voice; only the innate Self, stirring vaguely with new life, recognized it. She heard it with the ears of her soul, and she suffered because of some dimly felt restraint that she could not understand.

Her hand closed upon the velvet cushion and she grew faint. . . . Once more there arose before her mind a pale, fair face whose blue eyes and slender lips smiled with menacing cynicism, and passed. . . . A sound broke forcibly in upon the control of the music—a rich, manly laugh. Mrs. Spectre's wit had evidently moved Edgerton to uncontrollable mirth. The laugh aroused Elizabeth, and she turned and seated herself, leaning her head on her hand.

Lorton was watching her. The thought that she was soon to belong to him gave him a distinct shock. Whether this was agreeable or otherwise he did not trouble himself to determine, but in watching her he found a certain pleasure.

She was young; her lips were red with health; her form was shapely and perfectly matured. A wave of emotional impatience swept over him. She was to be his for life! At the thought his quickened pulses subsided. He despised the thought of a wife able to excite his emotions. It seemed to him that she had deceived him. She had worn a disguise to entrap him and had thrown it off as soon as she thought him safely hers.

An ugly expression came into his eyes. He approached her moodily.

"Have you had enough of this?" he asked.

Elizabeth started, and looked at him in surprise. His manner awoke in her a spirit of antagonism.

"No," she replied quietly; "I am enjoying it."

Lorton's brows contracted.

"I'm surprised at your taste," he said; "to me it is abominable. I think we had better go."

"I am sorry, Algernon, but I have promised the next waltz to—Mr. Edgerton. I cannot leave on the eve of it."

Her *futur* regarded her scornfully.

"You mean that you intend to go into that rabble again?"

"I am going to dance this waltz. If you mean that, yes." She stroked the velvet with sudden nervousness. The color in her face deepened. Her eyes, hidden from him by the dark lowered lashes, burned excitedly.

"I cannot permit it, Elizabeth," said Lorton sternly, "to my mind it is degrading."

The tone and words stung her. She raised her head quickly. Her face paled.

"I have decided," she said. Lorton stared. Rarely if ever before had a woman dared to deliberately oppose his wishes. Appreciating the wilful defiance of her words, he at the same moment became more keenly sensible of her beauty, which increased his irritation.

He beheld in her haughty pose, and in the brilliant splendor of her anger, a spirit she had never before revealed to him. The color rushed to his brow and a savage, red light came into his eyes. His next words, though spoken softly, were charged with anger and reproof.

"This is scarcely the place for a discussion," he said, "and I am astonished that you should have the bad taste to oppose my wishes here."

The emotional delight she had once experienced in yielding to him was now absent.

"I am sorry," she said coldly, "that you should find any action of mine out of keeping with good taste. It is a serious fault in the woman you intend to marry."

The words were spoken impetuously under the influence of an annoyance she scarcely appreciated. The pupils of Lorton's eyes contracted. A subtle change suggesting anxiety came over his face. Could it be possible that she had begun to regret? No; that was out of the question! She was having her silly little head turned by the attention her engagement had brought her. The thing for him to do, he decided, was to end this at once!

"Elizabeth," he said, with some restraint, "I'm afraid this going out is having anything but an improving effect upon you. I am sorry to see the change."

She met his eyes. Why was it that their stern expression failed to affect her?

The lines about his mouth appeared deeper; the flabby folds beneath his eyes were more apparent.

He had drunk the *pousse-café* of artificiality, and had revelled in each of its component sensations. He had solved all the mysteries of his own little world, and those secrets of which she was so ignorant were to him as an open book.

Lorton's features were to Elizabeth minutely familiar. She was acutely conscious of every small detail of his appearance, which fretted her now as might a pictured face on the wall of a prisoner's cell. . . . As she looked upon him there arose between them a pale, fair face whose blue eyes and slender lips smiled with menacing cynicism, then passed.

"I have gone out before in my life, Algernon,"

she said, quietly, "and I have told you that I enjoy it. Because for you these things have lost their charm, it seems rather—ungenerous to wish to deny me the pleasure of them."

"I know better than do you how pernicious is the influence of these things," he returned, "and already the effect of it is apparent in you. The quality in you most attractive to me is the absence of this—vapid nonsense——"

"This is my dance, I believe, Miss Thorley, if you are still willing," interrupted Edgerton, who had approached unnoticed.

Lorton turned irritably, but instantly forced a smile to his lips.

"Too bad, Edgerton," he said, lightly. "We've just decided to go. Miss Thorley is tired."

In Elizabeth's face the color came and went. Edgerton raised his brows ever so slightly, and took a step back, murmuring an apology.

"I think I am not too tired to dance this once, Algernon," the young woman said with admirable self-control; "I did not mean that I wished to go home immediately. I knew that I had promised this to Mr. Edgerton."

Lorton was instantly imbued with a jealous desire to thwart Edgerton.

"I should prefer you not to go again into that crowd, Elizabeth," he said, in an undertone.

"Shall we meet you here?" she asked, affecting not to hear him. "I shall not be long."

Lorton bowed stiffly. His face was very pale.

"Had you forgotten?" Edgerton asked, as they passed down the stairs.

"O, no," she returned; "Algernon probably thought he would do me a service, but I am really not so very tired."

Edgerton, who was a little in advance, paused and looked up at her; and she in turn glanced at him wonderingly, her blue eyes shining upon him through their half-closed lids. A glowing warmth surged through his veins; and there was that in his gaze, in the slight contraction of his beardless lips, that made Elizabeth's heart beat wildly.

All the hubbub of the ball seemed far away; they were conscious only of their pulses, and the force of some strong attraction drawing them together.

"Are you happy?" he murmured, as her shoulder touched his.

Although the contact was so slight as to be scarcely perceptible, she was keenly conscious of it; and she was convinced, too, that he was experiencing the same realization. For an instant it seemed to her they had been in perfect emotional communion.

His question puzzled her.

"Happy?" she repeated, dully.

"I mean as to your future?" he returned. "Does it promise to be all you pictured it?"

"Does any one ever expect to realize his dreams?"

"You should. . . . Every one could if he so determined. The trouble with most persons is that they do not bend their energies to obtain what they want. They devote all their strength to forcing contentment with what comes easily."

Elizabeth smiled.

"Well, that really seems the wiser way," she said; and there was a touch of sadness in her voice.

"But it isn't!" returned Edgerton, emphatically. "Such a plan is against all the principles of nature. Suppose a fish, that has been carried into a pool by the tide, makes no effort to regain its native

sea. What will happen to it when the puddle dries?"

"Yet to the fish that has struggled in vain all its life to keep away from the shore the pool must be gratifying."

"Is not strife with some brilliant possibility in view better than a short period of peace that must end in extinction?"

They had reached the dancing floor and about them the dancers circled unheeded. Their eyes met; in hers was bewildered questioning; in his a soft yearning more generous than passion. Suddenly they were conscious of their physical approach—the coming together of all their sensitive external fibres; and then they floated away with the music in their ears, and their pulses all a-quiver.

When at length they paused, breathless, Elizabeth's hands were cold to the centre of their palms, and a sudden faintness came over her.

To Lorton, who saw them approaching, their silence and Elizabeth's pallor conveyed no meaning. His thoughts were busy with a new discovery. That Elizabeth had been clever enough to thwart him, without permitting the situation to become embarrassing to either of them, irritated him because it was so utterly at variance with all his preconceived ideas of her. He recalled the widening and darkening of her pupils; the dignity with which she had held her head; the heaving of her bosom and the marble-like gleam of her firm flesh.

Now as he watched her with Edgerton in the throng below he recognized how well suited each seemed to the other.

He was old—old! . . . How had he dared to ask this young woman to tie herself to him? . . . Yet was he not giving her a fair return? She de-

sired wealth, and his wealth would be hers. Surely that was ample recompense. With this thought came a reaction and he reproved himself for his own morbidness.

"A sure sign of decadence!" he mused, with a long-drawn sigh.

"Hello, Lorton!" exclaimed Taddy McFinn's nasal voice behind him, and the speaker's broad palm came down with ostentatious, but somewhat uncertain, familiarity upon Lorton's shoulder.

He turned irritably and faced the bloated little millionaire. His greeting was coldly formal, and McFinn turned to where Elsworth and Mrs. Spectre sat conversing.

"Lorton's so absorbed by the prospect of being married that there's no obtaining a civil word from him."

"Is the prospect of happiness, then, an embittering element in your opinion?" asked Mrs. Spectre, still regarding him curiously.

"Happiness, no;" returned Taddy, "but matrimony. They're as far as the poles apart." The millionaire's pose was contempt and horror of the hymeneal knot.

Mrs. Spectre lowered her glass, and, assuming a bored look, played with her wrinkles.

"Taddy is something of a cynic, you must know, Mrs. Spectre," said Fred, seeking to please his financial ally, "I fancy he has suffered at the hands of some lady fair, and has adopted St. Chrysostom's opinion of the sex."

"What's that?" asked Taddy with the ease of one who feels himself substantially placed in spite of the fact that he is not entirely in favor.

"You mean the old man's opinion of woman?" questioned Fred.

"Yes, let's have it. Might assist me in forming mine."

"It is yours, my boy!" returned Fred, genially. "He considered her a necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic peril, a deadly fascination and a painted ill!"

"Ha! ha!" laughed the Croesus, doubling up. Mrs. Spectre regarded Fred smilingly, her little blurred eyes sparkling with appreciation.

"That's good," she said. "I had forgotten it. He probably uttered the words in his old age to prove the veracity of Pope's assertion that most old men are like old trees; past bearing themselves, they will suffer no young plant to flourish beneath them! Man's condemnation of woman is always the consequence of either hopeless senility or disappointed pique."

"It's all good," said Taddy, "but that 'desirable calamity,' and 'death-like fascination.' "I don't seem to get a good grip on that. The only calamity that could be desirable would be that the sex should cease to exist; that would be desirable in one sense, and a calamity in——"

"Here comes the bride-elect!" interrupted Elsworth as Elizabeth and Edgerton entered the box. "How pale she looks! Like a lily, eh?"

Mrs. Spectre's lorgnon was upon the girl in an instant. "Algernon drew a prize unconsciously," she said, thoughtfully.

"That's the luck of the man!" returned Fred, with affected spleen. "He's spent his days in riotous living, and playing fast and loose with all the hearts in the market. Then he creeps off to some sequestered spot and culls the fairest rose in the garden to shed its fragrance on his old age."

"Meanwhile," added Mrs. Spectre, "note the ad-

mirable fitness of those two," indicating Elizabeth and Edgerton. "Mark my words, Freddie, there will more develop from this affair than you or I dare imagine."

CHAPTER XI.

ELIZABETH realized at once that Lorton was seriously annoyed with her; and she resented his attitude, which she felt was unjust. She almost wished that they might have an open quarrel, and when in the carriage, on their way home, he remarked, "You have acted in a very extraordinary manner this evening," she was tempted to give way to anger; nevertheless, remembering that she had promised to become his wife, she managed to control her temper.

"I think it is scarcely just of you to reproach me," she said, quietly; "your treatment of me to-night was anything but kind or courteous."

"I cannot permit you to call me to account," he returned, severely; "I am much older than you; and you should understand that when I express a wish I have good reason for doing so."

Elizabeth's heart was beating excitedly. Back of the irritation, caused by these words and the tone in which they were uttered, one joyous thought rose vividly in her mind. She was not his property yet! He had no legitimate right to control her!

"I am not a child, Algernon," she said, "and you must not talk to me as if I were."

"Your open defiance of my expressed wish I cannot easily pardon."

"Your wish was unreasonable; there were any number of girls of our set, and much younger than

I, dancing when we came away. Both Mrs. Monroe and Mrs. Spectre remarked upon our leaving so early."

"You seem to forget," he said, with a return to his former severe tone, "that none of the girls we left dancing is to be my wife. What they think or do is a matter of indifference to me."

When they alighted, Elizabeth turned toward him. The street was quite deserted. In the strip of starlit sky, stretching between the rows of dark houses, a tilted moon floated grotesquely, its mellow light revealing the gleam of indignation in the woman's eyes.

"Algernon," she said, in that even tone which is at once gentle and ominous, "if you consider it necessary to train me so continually, in order to make me suitable to be your wife, I'm afraid I can never make you happy. I am not willing to resign my individuality."

Her words startled him and it required all his presence of mind and worldly knowledge to prevent her seeing it.

"It is not a question of my training you, child," he said, more gently, "my desire is to protect against all contaminating influences the woman whom, above all others, I—honor and cherish."

The word "love" seemed difficult. It appeared to him vapid and boyish; and indicative of a youthful extravagance that he deprecated.

Elizabeth heard the words quite calmly. Her reason told her that there was logic in what he said. His views of life must naturally be more correct than hers.

In the hallway he put his arm about her to kiss her good-night. She heard the familiar creaking of his shirt-bosom and, anticipating the touch of his

moustache she unconsciously shrank a little. Perceiving this he looked inquiringly into her face, which she had quickly averted. The lowered lashes lay dark upon her cheek. Her lips appeared unusually red and youthful. He felt the warmth of her through his coat-sleeve. Instinctively he appreciated a new life magnetism in her, and, filled with a desire to kiss her, such as he had never before experienced, he drew her to him.

"Kiss me!" he whispered; and there was passion in his voice. His words and his tone set her every nerve on edge. As she raised her face to meet his, she again experienced a sense of repulsion, and her hands clenched.

He kissed her twice, and then releasing her, hated himself for his weakness.

He would allow no one but Cora to affect his emotions. She understood and was never exacting. This girl was to be a comforter, not an indulgence. And yet what was this new element in her that made him hesitate? The languid light of her eyes, the half-fretful shrinking of her form.

"Elizabeth, look at me!" he said, making an attempt to turn her about. "What has come to you? Do you love me?"

He had not intended to utter those words. They had come involuntarily, and as he heard them uttered in a voice so gentle that he scarcely recognized it to be his own, a flush of mortification suffused his face.

He released her quickly, almost roughly.

"Good-night!" he said, and left her.

Upon reaching her room, Elizabeth sank into a deep chair, her wrap thrown back from her bare shoulders. A broad strip of pale moonshine came it at the window and spread across the floor.

She realized that within her some awful revolution was taking place. She felt that in some way she had changed. She had lost interest in her trousseau, and the thought of marriage no longer pleased. A dull despondency had settled upon her. She was oppressed with a sense of guilt, yet unable to comprehend what wrong she had done.

Six weeks ago there had seemed to be nothing lacking in the fulness of her cup. She had sprung from an existence of obscurity and loneliness into the brilliant world she loved, and she had been triumphantly proud of being chosen as Algernon Lorton's wife. Now all this had given way to an emotional interest that she could not understand. In her ears the strains of a waltz continued ceaselessly, and her pulses responded to them.

In an effort to throw off the mood that possessed her, she sat up and looked about the shadowy room. As she recognized the dull pictures and shabby furniture that had witnessed so many sad hours of her life, the old dread of mediocrity and monotony rose like a spectre before her and made her afraid.

She remembered the change that had come over Lorton's face in the hall, his unusual tenderness, and the memory fretted her. The next day her wedding cards would be out, and scarcely two weeks later she would be bound forever to this man.

The idea appeared incredible, almost ludicrous.

"In two weeks' time I shall be the wife of Algernon Lorton," she said to herself; "and to-night I shrank from kissing him!"

She rose and stood in the shaft of moonlight, with her hands clasped, looking up through the window to the illumined sky.

"Sheer ingratitude," she mused, half aloud. "Having attained so much, I want more. . . . I

came very near making a fool of myself to-night—for what? . . . Poor Algernon!”

She recalled his softened tone and troubled look when she had uttered those menacingly significant words, and the memory was in some way annoying to her. Until that evening his touch had been as unperturbing as that of her aunt. Now some inner fibre of her being had been quickened to life and keen susceptibility, and his touch fretted her. When she tried to understand this change, the strains of the waltz lived again in her brain, repeating again and again, with maddening persistence, that one melody. Her hands grew cold, and a feeling of oppression swept over her.

Controlled by an emotion she could not understand, she fell upon her knees by the bed, murmuring, tragically:

“My God! Forgive me! Forgive me!”

CHAPTER XII.

LORTON was conscious of Elizabeth's changed attitude toward him, and that the thought of it continued to dwell with him after he had left her—annoyed him seriously. He remembered now with regret a promise he had made to Mrs. White, when she had begged him to bring Miss Thorley to one of her little late suppers set for the following evening. He had made excuses, but she had appeared so deeply hurt that he eventually yielded; and now he was sorry.

As he strolled homeward, moody and depressed, a feeling of resentment towards his fiancée took possession of him, and he told himself that this was

probably the beginning of the end. He was persuaded that he should never enjoy real peace again, and he subjected himself to a mental flagellation for having allowed a girl of her inexperience to interfere with the even tenor of his life. It was preposterous that he should permit her moods to affect him.

His eye was attracted by a glorious array of floral beauty tastefully massed in the window of a florist's shop. To-morrow, he determined, he would send all of those flowers to Elizabeth. He would write her a little note—the kind that had fascinated other women—and would send it with his offering. Then he laughed a little contemptuously, and pursued his way, murmuring something about an old imbecile and second childhood.

The next day he sent the flowers to Mrs. White—and the note to Elizabeth was never written.

Edgerton invited Mrs. Featherweight to make the fourth of his opera party. She was pretty and frivolous, and he felt that she would be more pleasing to Lorton than a music enthusiast. Lorton, however, was not gratified. Between this woman's senseless babble, and the—to him—incomprehensible opera, he did not anticipate a very pleasant evening. He was still depressed, and he longed with the self-indulgent weakness of his nature, for some diversion that would change the character of his thoughts. That Elizabeth was at the root of his depression he did not permit himself to realize, and the idea that there had been a change in her manner towards him he put away with contempt.

It was, therefore, a pleasant surprise when he recognized Mrs. White in a box almost directly opposite. The high-colored Miss Smiley was with her, relieved against a background of Fred Elsworth, McFinn, and the rosy-cheeked Hamilton Dexter,

who stared, with unabashed audacity, through his glasses at Mrs. Featherweight.

To Elizabeth the scene was entrancing. Only once before had she figured as one of the brilliantly arrayed women who formed that splendid horse-shoe of light and beauty, on a full-dress grand opera night. The marvellous prelude of "Rheingold," depicting so beautifully and simply the transition from the tranquil depths of water to the restless life of the Rhine-daughters, moved her strangely. The melody of the horns, wave-like and gliding, like the current of a river; and the flowing accompaniment of the 'cellos, carrying the motive to the woodwind, rising higher and higher, like the emotional stirring of deep waters from their bed to their surface, filled her with an ecstasy that was as delicious as it was novel. She became unconscious of everything but the music, and some undefined element near her, that seemed the music's embodied self.

The curtain rose, revealing the flowing waters of the Rhine, penetrated by the greenish pallor of twilight, and the *woglinde* circling gracefully around her rock, singing the wavy melody of the Rhine-daughters:

*Weia! Waga! Woge, du welle,
Walle zur Wiege! Wagala weia!
Wallala, Weiala, weia!*

Then the others, darting from cliff to cliff, and *Alberich*, climbing up from the depths to watch them.

As Elizabeth sat entranced, Edgerton watched her eager, intelligent face; her great eyes grown darker with excitement, her lips parted. Nor was she unconscious of his gaze. With pulses thrilling under the influence of this concordance of sound, she was keenly aware of his presence.

Through a quivering accompaniment of violins, the "Rheingold" motive swelled clear and strong from the throats of the silver horns. The cry of "Rheingold! Rheingold!" made her blood tingle through her veins. She trembled as her hands came together, and clasped each other fiercely. Her mind became introspective. She felt Edgerton's regard acting strongly upon the emotional excitement of her nerves.

Rhein—gold! Hei—a, ja—hei—a!

She dared not look at him, and yet the impulse to do so was almost irresistible. . . .

Suddenly there was a change. She felt herself removed with him to some indefinite isolation. She was alone at his side; tired, but reliant upon his strength. The curtain had fallen, but she was not aware of it. She was deaf to the applause, deaf to the murmur of voices about her, and very pale. And Edgerton, too, was in much the same condition of emotional exaltation.

As a buzz of conversation broke out over the house with the fall of the curtain, Mrs. White, catching Lorton's eye, and seeing that both Elizabeth and Edgerton were too much absorbed to notice, made a sign for him to come to her. There was about her signal an air of proprietorship, which told him that he was abjectly under her control. It seemed pleasant to him to believe this. It was a relief from his mood; and he nodded to indicate that he understood and would be with her presently.

"Why!" exclaimed Mrs. Featherweight, in an intense undertone, "how interesting! She is making signs to you!"

"Who?" asked Lorton, looking about the house searchingly.

"Oh, such innocence!" returned the widow. "But I'm not quite so dense as you imagine; I saw it distinctly."

Her companion glanced at her, half amused, half annoyed.

"I wish you would give me the benefit of your—cleverness the next time you see anything of the sort," he said, dryly.

"Such nonsense! You saw it as well as I did; and you know there is to be no second time. What frauds you men are! . . . And yet you are dear things! How should we women ever get on in this dark vale of woe without you, I wonder?"

"Not long, I'm afraid;—not more than a generation," returned Lorton, carelessly.

"How conceited! Well, I think we could! In a hundred years or so we shouldn't miss you."

Lorton laughed, and leaned back into the shadow. He was waiting for Dexter to relieve him.

The widow looked at him with delighted smiles. She had often been told by Hamilton Dexter that she was clever, and she was herself confident of it because she found it so easy to make people laugh. She hoped she amused Lorton, for her vanity told her that with care and pains she might be able, even at that late hour, to usurp Elizabeth Thorley's place in his favor. He was just the style of man she liked, and although not quite so wealthy as young Dexter, he was a more influential and recognized personage in the set upon the threshold of which her first marriage had successfully landed her.

"I love to hear you laugh," she whispered, seductively. "There is something so irresistibly—susceptible about it. Do you know what I mean?"

"Oh, yes . . . yes, I know." Lorton shook visibly with suppressed merriment.

"Stop!" she said, tapping him reprovingly with her fan. "You're naughty to laugh at me."

"How can I help it?"

Then Hamilton Dexter came and Lorton went to join Mrs. White.

People chattered on every side. Only two sat silent. Edgerton's face was grave, and his eyes brilliant with a look peculiarly like that in Elizabeth's. Under the influence of the strong feeling simultaneously possessing them, their faces evidenced a striking resemblance. Neither spoke, but after a little while Elizabeth turned and looked at her companion. Their eyes met, and for fully a minute they stared into each other's souls.

"Thought I'd come over and pay my respects," said Fred Elsworth, entering at this moment, and taking a seat near Elizabeth. "To me this is the greatest charm of opera going—the chance to get about and see one's friends for a few moments' comfortable chat. Don't care a fig for all this overrated Wagner business! Think I've heard everything he ever wrote at least fifty times, and to save my life I couldn't distinguish one melody from another now, if I tried!"

With this man's advent Elizabeth awakened to the reality of things.

Her reply, though unconsidered and scarcely conscious, gave to Elsworth no hint of her absorption. With the beginning of the second scene he retired and Lorton did not return; and for both of these things Elizabeth was unutterably grateful.

The curtain rose, revealing the dawn-illuminated castle against a rocky background and the murmuring Rhine flowing in the valley below. The stately Walhalla motive rose and fell in consonance with the heaving bosom of the beautiful *Fricka*, who

lay sleeping at *Wotan's* side. At first both Elizabeth and Edgerton were irritably conscious of persons whispering in the box near them, but with the first bar of the *Freia* motive they fell again under the spell of the music, realizing only each other's presence and the controlling passion of the composer.

At the end of the second act Fred returned to say that Lorton wanted to know if Elizabeth cared to walk a little in the corridor. To the girl the proposition came as a relief. She had indeed grown half afraid of her own emotions and she went eagerly in response to the suggestion.

CHAPTER XIII.

"In some mysterious way," Edgerton observed, when they reached the corridor, "I felt it all filtered through you. You see, '*Rheingold*' is a favorite of mine and I am so familiar with it that I think I could play the whole thing through from memory. And yet to-night it seemed new."

"To me it was all absolutely beautiful," returned Elizabeth, pensively. "It was not like music, as I have understood it before. . . . It was like a return of something I had known ages ago and for which I have been longing ever since."

"I wonder if there is not some foundation of truth in that feeling," said Edgerton, in the same tone; "I was conscious of a similar impression. To me it seemed that some portion of my nature, that has been closed always, was suddenly thrown open, arousing some part of me that had lived before my memory."

They paused near an opening from which they could look down upon the crowded lower house. Soft strains rising from the orchestra reached them in harmonious accord with their mood. They listened in silence.

Again they became deaf and blind to all else but the sense of each other's proximity. Edgerton's eyes strayed involuntarily to the girl's face. She felt his glance and looked up at him, whereupon both smiled like children.

"There is the Walhalla motive again," said Edgerton. "Do you recognize it?"

"Yes. How expressive it is! So broad and stately now, then falling to that gentleness which seems almost like a human voice."

"To me there is expressed in that motive—not love, as it is commonly understood, but a harmonic relation of souls which is the only real love."

Elizabeth did not reply. Her head fell forward, her eyes became fixed.

"I never before could understand what people meant when they spoke of a relation of souls," said Edgerton, thoughtfully. "It always appeared to me like childish sentimentality. But there is such a thing; and it is absolutely devoid of sentimentality. . . . Do you hear that stately undercurrent beneath the *molto dolce* of the violins? The notes combine in a tremulous strength of harmonious vibration. The spirit of the melody exists upon this. It is the foundation of feeling—the essence of God. We of ourselves are nothing, it is this master chord that— . . . Aristophanes's theory of the origin of love was that in the beginning there were three sexes; male, born of the sun-god; female, of the earth, and one in whom were united the attributes of both, born of the moon. Zeus ordered Apollo to cut them in two,

and each of these half-beings still wanders looking for the other half."

"And music might be the voices of these divided beings?" said Elizabeth, dreamily.

"Yes—or the bitter grief of those who find themselves united to the wrong half," said her companion.

"Think of the earth-born united to the sun-god's half!"

"Yet how often they are?" returned Edgerton, "and the cold moon-born united to the sun-born?"

Lorton had caught sight of them from the rear, and followed them quickly, at Mrs. White's instigation. The fact that he was irritated by again seeing Elizabeth with Edgerton caused him a pang of annoyance. The last thing in the world he would ever be willing to acknowledge in himself was jealousy. Since the girl would be his in two weeks why should he worry?

"Miss Thorley," said Mrs. White as she took Elizabeth's extended hand, "Mr. Lorton has promised to bring you to my house to-night for supper. I hope you will be able to come." She spoke with that suave insincerity of tone which is of itself an insulting flattery.

Elizabeth's lashes fluttered like the wings of a pursued butterfly. She glanced toward Lorton.

"I forgot to speak to you of it," he said pulling his moustache in a way he had when slightly embarrassed; "meant to tell you in the box. It escaped my mind."

"I shall be charmed," she said, with conventional heedlessness, in answer to Mrs. White's invitation.

"And you must come too, Mr. Edgerton," said Mrs. White as she and Lorton moved away with the crowd now hurrying back to their boxes.

In accepting the invitation Edgerton shot a glance of reproof at Lorton, but the older man chose to ignore it.

Throughout the third act Lorton sat moodily thinking, deaf both to the motive of the Tarn-helmet, and the verbal folly of his companion. He regretted having returned to the box. Elizabeth had not so much as looked up at his entrance. He decided that this hanging about of Edgerton must be stopped. It made no difference to him but it did not look well!

Elizabeth was paler than ever; and Edgerton seeing the color fade from her lips yearned to take her in his arms, to pillow her head upon his breast and to bring back the flush of life to her face by the living fervor of his love. He felt that only he could revive her, that only through him could she attain to the fulness of realized maturity.

Once more the Walhalla motive swelled forth, now to a majestic climax as the gods entered the castle. Elizabeth clasped her hands fiercely. To her senses one note seemed to dominate all else and with it came a subtle longing for the embrace of arms.

She made an effort to free herself from the power of the music. She looked toward the house, hoping thus to divert her attention, and break from the atmosphere of emotional control closing so thick about her, but the people seemed far away and unreal. She could not concentrate her thoughts. An influence stronger than her will controlled her.

A distressing sound racked her nerves. It was a thunder of applause. Then came silence, ominous, surcharged; boding it seemed to her, the near approach of some event that would mark an epoch in her life.

"Is this yours?"

She looked up and beheld Edgerton standing with her wrap held in readiness for her. As her eyes met his, her brain whirled, so that she did not comprehend what Lorton was saying about her going on to Mrs. White's with Edgerton, where he would join them when he had taken Mrs. Featherweight home.

It seemed quite natural to have Edgerton place the wrap about her. The touch of his hands was comforting.

Lorton watched them an instant, unperceived. The girl's pallor and lassitude puzzled him. He wondered if he was wise to leave her. Then he laughed at his apprehension and hurried from the box with the widow.

Edgerton fastened the cloak carefully and gleaned from the shadow of her lowered lashes a secret scarcely known to herself. When the carriage door was closed upon them, Elizabeth sank into the corner as though shrinking from him. Her hands had become cold and nerveless. They could not hold the wrap. Softly, it slipped a little from the gleaming whiteness of her arm.

Edgerton leaned near to her.

"You are tired?" he murmured, interrogatively.

"No."

The sound of the horses' feet beat upon their senses, and mingled with their throbbing pulses. They felt some irresistible force drawing them together, a force against which they had no strength.

"Speak to me!"

For an instant she did not stir. Then suddenly her head fell back and her luminous eyes showed strangely in the gloom. Involuntarily her hand sought his.

Like the fulfilment of some slowly culmin-

ating natural law, she felt his arms about her soothing all the aching fibres of her being ; she felt the breath of his life.

"You will come with me, beloved?" he whispered. "You are mine. In the sight of God, and in my sight, and in yours, you are mine, Elizabeth. What does the rest matter?"

Monotonously, the horses' feet beat the asphalt. The wheels rumbled. Now and again shadows were thrown across the windows, like spectres coming and passing.

"Tell me, dear," he implored, his head bent low to her.

He felt the warmth of her as she leaned against him. Her soft, fragrant hair touched his lips.

"Tell me you will come! Tell me that you love me!"

For them there existed no world beyond that little dark interior, no control stronger than the impulse of the moment.

"Do you love me?"

"Yes."

She felt his embrace, as one who is tired feels the nerve-easing caress of sleep. Her whole nature relaxed with infinite peace ; and through her mind, as in a dream, surged a sweet, delirious echo of the music they had heard together.

For the first time in her life the depths of her nature lived.

Faint sounds reached them from without, penetrating the silence of their love and fading before the music in their minds. The horses' hoofs, beating regularly, were like the double basses intoning E flat and the B flat of the contra bassoons that bear the burden of the Rhine. They seemed to be floating in a sea of music, infinite as space.

Then came a sudden change, a shock. The carriage had stopped and, mechanically, Edgerton was opening the door.

"Come!" he whispered, and he half lifted her to the deserted pavement.

The girl's eyes, wide with inward storm, sought his, and she laid her hand appealingly upon his arm.

"Where are we?"

He gazed upon her silently. He was whiter than the pale moon above them. The cool wind touched their faces with revivifying effect. All the night seemed alive with music. The feeble sounds from the tired city passed like soft zephyrs. They were conscious of a mutual attraction, unreasoning and occult as the blending of sound.

The girl clung to him tremulously. Her eyes were a reflection of his. Her lips were parted with the same thought that remained unspoken on his lips. It was a moment of sensuous inebriety, and then—One of the horses coughed and the sound echoed down the silent street.

Elizabeth felt as though she were awakening from the effects of an opiate. The houses about them became suddenly distinct as though emerging from a fog. She looked upon her companion and recognized him as the man she loved. With the realization came a peculiar contempt for herself, a dread lest in his heart he were judging her. She drew back.

He stared at her.

"Paul, if you love me——" Her voice was faint.

He bowed his face in his hands an instant, feeling her quivering touch upon his arm. When he looked up he was paler than she and his eyes were dark with pain. He smiled but the smile was more sad than tears.

"We have made a mistake. I don't know why we are here," he whispered, "Come!"

When he had led her back to the carriage and she was within, he said to the coachman, huskily :

"The first address I gave was the right one. I've made a mistake. Get there as quickly as possible."

In the vehicle they sat apart—the woman, like a hurt bird, huddled in one corner; the man leaning forward, his face buried in his hands.

When they reached Mrs. White's house he helped Elizabeth out carefully for she was weak and trembling. In the hallway she glanced in a mirror, and her ghastly face startled her.

As they followed the butler up the velvet stairway Edgerton said, softly and with infinite feeling :

"Forgive me, dearest! Only God can know what I suffered."

CHAPTER XIV.

So thoroughly absorbed were Elizabeth and Edgerton on entering the White establishment that neither noticed the silence that pervaded it nor remarked the dim light of hall and rooms. The Turkish room into which they were ushered certainly gave no indication that a party was in progress. In the dull rose glow that pervaded it no one was visible. The approach of the visitors had been muffled by the heavy carpets. The butler appeared particularly careful to make no sound. As though carrying out some prearranged design, he conducted them well into the room before announcing them.

At the sound of his voice, Mrs. White started up from a divan in the shadowy cosy-corner, her hair ruffled and her whole appearance indicative of in-

timate carelessness. Lorton followed her precipitantly. A dark color mounted to his face, which was already unusually flushed by the punch of which they had both partaken rather intemperately. His hostess had been careful that he should not note the flight of time. She had explained Elizabeth's delay by suggesting that Edgerton had forgotten the address and had been obliged to go out of his way to learn it.

Lorton had accepted this solution of the matter, as he had accepted the punch and her caresses, gratefully, because it helped him to forget his foolish anxiety. But Mrs. White herself was suspicious. She had counted the minutes, and her curiosity was now at fever point. Touching an electric button in the wall, she flooded the room with light. In the ghastly faces of her visitors she read a story that was most welcome.

"How late you are!" she remarked, "no accident, I hope?"

"Yes," returned Edgerton, whose expression had changed to one of moody anger since entering the room. "Our horses became frightened and bolted; we came near losing our lives."

"Dear me!" Mrs. White looked straight at him and laughed ironically, "in that great omnibus of a brougham——? You certainly look as if something serious had occurred; you're as white as two——" She paused abruptly and directed a quick glance toward Lorton. Then she added defiantly: "Too bad you were frightened!"

"You are white, that's a fact!" exclaimed Lorton nasally. "Elizabeth, my dear, your look ill; if——"

"Well, go and fetch some brandy, Algie," interrupted Mrs. White familiarly. "You know

where it is. Hurry along, and don't be so foolish as to ask questions!"

Elizabeth looked up quickly. The woman's vulgar speech and intimate lightness of tone irritated her.

"Why should Mr. Lorton not ask questions?" she demanded coldly, as Lorton went obediently into the next room. "There is certainly no reason why he should not, and I fail to understand your right to forbid him."

"Oh, there is no reason—of course not," returned their hostess with a little laugh, "but—would it not be better?" She looked up insinuatingly from beneath her penciled brows, as she took a silver cigarette-case from the table and prepared a cigarette for lighting.

"I don't understand you," said Elizabeth, haughtily.

"No? . . . Ha, ha! . . . Do you smoke?" proffering the cigarette-case with an insolent smile.

"No."

"Mrs. White's pleasantry is naturally obscure to you, Miss Thorley," said Edgerton, with cutting significance. "She has the—advantage of different conditions, and broader experience. You could not understand."

The matron's lips paled and her eyes gleamed angrily.

"But you do, Edgerton, so why not laugh?" she said, sneeringly, "you know Dr. Johnson said a man's understanding can be measured by his mirth, and surely you must see the joke in this—eh—escape of yours."

"I appreciate that a joke is intended," returned Edgerton, coolly, "but I fail to see the point."

Lorton approached with the brandy.

"This is unfortunate," he said in an unnatural tone, as he prepared a small quantity of the brandy for his fiancée. "You must be all shaken up, eh?"

"Algie, when will you ever look upon things rationally?" demanded Mrs. White between rapid puffs that indicated she was in a dangerously reckless mood. "A shaking-up indulged in at the right time, and with the right party is not such a bad thing! You ought to know that. My long training of you seems to have taught you very little."

She knew that she was hurting herself by these speeches, but Edgerton's remark had angered her and she was no longer able to keep rein upon her impulses. She feared, moreover, that her little scheme to bring about a disagreement between Elizabeth and Lorton was not destined to achieve the success she had planned.

Lorton's agitation especially troubled her. She had never before seen him in such a mood and she could not understand it.

"I thought this was to be a party, Algernon," said Elizabeth, in an undertone of cold annoyance.

"So it is," he returned, with intentional brusqueness. "The others will be here in a little while."

As she took the glass from him he added: "When they turn up we shall drink your health, my sweet;" and he pressed her fingers as his met them about the glass, laughing foolishly.

This newly revealed side of him revolted Elizabeth; but in memory of her own error she forgave and accepted blindly the insult of the situation. Edgerton, however, was softened by no such pricks of conscience. He was savage against Lorton, and all the others who had conspired to bring the girl to this house, and he longed for an opportunity to vent his anger.

"Algie, you'd better see that Brown has not put ice in the punch, if you don't want it ruined," said Mrs. White in an irritable tone, suggestive of great intimacy. "You never think of anything yourself, but you're sure to be the first to complain if everything isn't just right!"

Lorton glanced at her, blinking under the impression of something wrong in her tone; but the proprietorship it expressed was all that penetrated to his drugged brain. He persuaded himself that it was sweet to have her speak so; and somehow this false satisfaction was enhanced by the sense of Elizabeth's presence.

Edgerton followed him into the dining-room.

"Lorton," he said, when they were alone, "you have done a contemptible thing in bringing Miss Thorley to this house."

He had been bending over the punch bowl; but at the sound of Edgerton's voice he straightened up hastily, and faced the speaker in amazement. "What the devil do you mean?" he snapped.

"I mean that I consider it an outrage to bring that girl here!" returned Edgerton, with feeling. "If you're not drunk you must see what an insult you are offering her!"

Lorton strode toward him.

"Do you know to whom you're speaking, sir?" he demanded, angrily.

Edgerton did not stir. He met the other's challenging eyes with a glance both angry and contemptuous.

"Perfectly well, I'm sorry to say," he replied, "but from this night our acquaintance ends. Never again shall I acknowledge you—never again, so long as I live!"

Both men were very white; and for a moment

they stared into each other's faces in speechless rage.

"There's something back of this, Edgerton?" said Lorton in a more sober tone. His face expressed no longer anger, but startled apprehension.

"There's something back of it," he repeated, "and I demand that you explain it."

Edgerton hesitated an instant; then he said quite calmly:

"There's this back of it, if you wish to know; I value Elizabeth Thorley's happiness and the respect due her more, apparently, than does the man she has promised to marry."

In his appreciation of the significance of the words, Lorton ignored the insult to himself. He saw before him a man nearly twelve years his junior, good-looking, intellectual and well-off. In a flash he beheld Elizabeth again as he had seen her in the box at the Charity Ball, and a spasm of pain tortured his heart as when he had held her, almost against her will, and kissed her in her aunt's hall.

"You do?" he said, dully, "you do?" He was spared the necessity of uttering more than this inane repetition, by the entrance of Fred Elsworth, who, with the rest of the party, had just arrived.

Meanwhile Mrs. White had found time to say to Elizabeth in a tone of proprietary compassion: "Poor Algie, I can understand just how he feels. No one knows how the prospect of matrimony affects a man of his age and temperament. It is a far more serious matter, you know, than it would be to a younger man, and one who hasn't been so long independent and untrammelled. You are very brave, Miss Thorley, to undertake so grave a—problem."

Elizabeth looked at her an instant, perplexed and

lacking words with which to reply. Before she had recovered herself the others entered.

"Ah! here you are, boys, pillaging the bowl of course!" exclaimed Fred as, following the scent of the punch as a hound tracks game, he came upon Edgerton and Lorton in the dining-room. "'My clay with long oblivion has gone dry; but fill me with the old familiar juice. Methinks——'"

"No sacrilege, Fred!" interrupted Edgerton, quickly resorting to an easy air, in spite of the fact that his face was white as the cloth on the table. "Quote something more on your level, man; not the sublime Omar."

As Lorton bent over the punch, his hand trembled. He, also, was pale, and he looked old and grave.

"That old reprobate!" returned Fred with mock scorn, and successfully concealing his suspicion of something wrong. "Gad! if he was sublime I must be divine, for my natural capacity forbids my indulging in the excesses he taught."

"What did that wise 'Preacher,' son of David, say in Ecclesiastics?" remarked Mrs. White, who entered at this moment, puffing vulgarly at her cigarette. "'There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink;' for all go to the same place, all are of dust, and all turn——"

"Oh, here! here!" cried Miss Smiley, who pushed after her, with a cigarette held ready to light between her fingers, "don't quote scripture, Cora, I strike at that!"

Elizabeth followed with Taddy. She was very pale, and her eyes were fixed. In her face Lorton found proof of all that he dreaded. The lines about his mouth deepened. Mingled with his pain was a wild and unreasoning anger toward the girl. He

was not accustomed to suffering, and he blamed her bitterly for bringing it upon him—for placing him in a humiliating position before the world.

His eyes, bloodshot and tortured, surveyed the others, and rested for an instant upon Cora. The anger, still fermenting within her, had brought to her fair face all the innate hardness and vulgarity of her nature. The contrast with the refined sadness of Elizabeth's features gave him something of a shock.

His hands clenched fiercely, his eyes flashed; and he felt almost that he hated her.

"Well, Algie, what's troubling you?" she whispered, as seeing the change in his face she approached, and rested her elbow in the bend of his arm.

Lorton drew away testily.

"For God's sake," he said savagely in a tone as low as hers, "don't make any further exhibition of yourself!"

The pale eyes of the woman before him became paler. Her slender upper lip contracted.

"The bear has a sore head?" she questioned with insolent contempt. "Too much fiancée, my boy! You're becoming so irascible that I'll welcome the day you're married and off my hands forever."

"You've done all you can to prevent my marriage," he returned, without forethought; "I should think you would be satisfied!"

She glanced at him keenly, her eyes shining as a cat's eyes in the dark.

"If I'd succeeded you might thank me," she said. "Look at her! a thing of moody marble! She'll be driving you to drink, or to the divorce court inside of two months!"

Involuntarily Lorton looked toward Elizabeth.

Something in the coarse tone of the woman beside him, and in the familiar chatter of Miss Smiley and her companion, accentuated the refined, yet almost tragic, pallor of the girl's face. In that instant she raised her great angry eyes, and fixed them upon him. His pulses leapt with sudden excitement, as they had not done for many a year.

Was there then some real youth left in him that only she was able to stir? With this thought there came to him a sensation of self-reproach; like that experienced by one who has unintentionally thrown into the sea something of great value.

Elizabeth averted her eyes immediately. A firm determination had formed in her mind; and in obedience to it she glanced toward Edgerton. Then, quickly changing her intention, she approached Taddy.

"I wish to go home," she said. "Will you kindly see me to my carriage?"

Edgerton caught the words, and seeing that Taddy had partaken a little too greedily of the punch, came to her before the other had time to reply.

"Will you permit me?" he asked, in a lower tone even than that in which she had spoken.

Elizabeth looked into his handsome, troubled face; their glances communicated what their lips feared to utter. She felt the impetus of an inexorable fate driving her toward some finale that she dared not contemplate. Her lips pronounced the one word "Thanks." Then she turned to Mrs. White.

"I am obliged to leave you," she said, with a fearless distinctness that had the effect of silencing every one in the room.

"What! Before supper?"

Mrs. White's delicate coloring became more

distinct against a sudden pallor of anger; the pupils of her pale eyes widened and contracted quickly.

"Yes," replied Elizabeth, coldly, "at once."

"This is most—extraordinary!" Mrs. White exclaimed, realizing, at last, the advisability of self-control and looking appealingly toward Lorton. "Am I to be subjected to such insult, Algernon?"

"I don't understand," said that individual, in a dazed tone, as he looked in amazement at his fiancée. "Elizabeth, you can't do this sort of thing."

"I do not ask you to leave, Algernon," returned the girl, calmly, "I shall return alone."

"With Mr. Edgerton, I presume!" put in Mrs. White, who again lost mastery of herself, under a new storm of anger.

Elizabeth ignored the remark, but Lorton crimsoned, and dashed his glass so fiercely to the table, by which he stood, that it was shattered to atoms.

"You won't dare to do this thing, Edgerton?" he cried fiercely, facing the man he addressed with the attitude of a hero in melodrama.

"I am controlled in the matter solely by Miss Thorley's wishes," he returned gravely. "If she will grant me the privilege of seeing her home, I shall greatly appreciate it."

"Good acting!" sneered Mrs. White. "This was all planned beforehand, Algie, mark my——"

"Your words are grossly undeserved——" began Elizabeth, but Lorton, now beside himself with anger and pique, interrupted her.

"I wish this shameful wrangling to cease," he said, with the dictatorial passion of an offended egotist. "Elizabeth, I'm surprised that you should act in this scandalous manner, and I forbid your leaving here until after supper."

Had he studied the situation carefully with a

view to assisting Mrs. White in her ambition, he could have said nothing better calculated to increase the friction of the moment.

Elizabeth drew herself up haughtily. With a hand upon the back of a chair she steadied herself. The instant was ominous, and she felt it to the depths of her being.

"I no longer acknowledge your right to dictate to me, Mr. Lorton," she said distinctly. "The insult you have offered me to-night I can never overlook."

A dead silence followed her words. Every one stared in astonishment. Even Edgerton was amazed. Then she turned and swept like a queen from the room.

As she did so Mrs. White gave a little laugh.

"Oh, what a cunning creature!" she murmured significantly. "Algie, Algie, you have got your deserts!"

Lorton sprang toward Edgerton. His face was livid.

"You have done this," he cried, passionately. "In the guise of a friend you have——"

Fred seized him and dragged him back.

"Haven't we had about enough of this penny-dreadful stuff?" he demanded. "For God's sake, don't make more of a scandal of it?"

"He'll never learn," sneered Mrs. White, who was bitterly piqued. "Even now he doesn't see through that woman's wiles. She didn't appreciate you, my dear, so the two arranged this little matter to be rid of you. I saw it in their faces the minute——"

Edgerton paused as he was about to leave the room.

"You are speaking in your own house, Mrs.

White," he interrupted, angrily, "and, being a woman, you have the advantage; nevertheless, in justice to Miss Thorley I must denounce what you say as untrue."

"What right have you to defend her?" cried Lorton, trying wildly to free himself from Fred's hold.

"The right of one who honors her more than you have done, sir," returned Edgerton with dignity.

His tone and the attitude with which he faced the five other occupants of the room silenced all. In the background Elizabeth, with her cloak about her shoulders, stood waiting.

Lorton uttered no further word, but with head bowed leaned against the sideboard. Mrs. White begged a light from Taddy. Calculation was taking the place of anger in her eyes.

"A nice disgrace!" Lorton murmured, speaking to himself.

"Buy off the papers—nothing easier!" snapped Mrs. White, "or buy off your friend there," indicating Fred, "he's the only one of us who markets such things."

Miss Smiley and Taddy chuckled. Lorton scowled at the floor.

"I'll not sell it, don't fear!" said Fred, good-naturedly, as he filled a glass with punch. "My friends are more profitable than the newspapers. For my part I'm of the same mind as—what's his name—the old Frenchman. I wish Adam had died with all his ribs in his body!"

A burst of laughter, from all but Lorton, greeted these words. As it died the sound of the front door closing noisily came to their ears.

CHAPTER XV.

ELIZABETH's hand felt cold through her glove, as her companion helped her into the carriage; and when they were seated it trembled in his clasp.

There was no question about his going with her. It seemed quite natural and right to both that he should.

The streets were gray with the pallor of dawn. From afar came the rumble of an early wagon jarring upon the silence.

Edgerton looked at the fair face showing pale against the window's square of bluish light. Involuntarily he leaned nearer.

"To-morrow you will feel all this so bitterly. To-morrow and to-day, beloved," he whispered. "All the burden of it will come upon you—all the comments and criticism. Let me take you away from it. Let us be married now. I love you, Elizabeth. . . . Look at me. . . ."

The clatter of the horse's hoofs seemed to carry them back. They forgot everything save the continuation of their hour of love.

"You have saved yourself from committing the deadliest sin in the whole code of immorality," he said, when she asked him if she had done right. "Had you married him you had both been wronged. . . ."

The pulse of the living world stirred intermittently like something from which these two were apart; the distant clatter of wagons—the voices of men. . . .

"You will wait for me here?" she asked, in the voice of that infant identity his love had aroused.

"Be with me here before the sun rises," he whispered, as she stepped alone from the carriage, before her aunt's house. For answer she stretched her hand back into the gloom of the coupé, that it might meet his again; and as he looked at her the dawn revealed to him the love-radiance of her face.

She opened the house door with her latchkey, and disappeared. As he sat alone in the carriage, all his nature, for weeks fretted by a love that seemed hopeless, relapsed with the comfortable relief of an attained ambition.

A hansom drew up close by, and some one got out. Edgerton saw the man distinctly, but for a moment the stooping shoulders, and the haggard and drawn face, were unrecognized as those of Algernon Lorton.

The newcomer glanced at the coupé, then at the house, and again at the coupé.

"Why are you waiting?" he demanded of the coachman.

"For the young lady, sir," was the answer.

Lorton glanced again at the coupé, and stood hesitating.

Edgerton shrank into the shadow. For her sake he wished to avoid a scene.

Lorton paced restlessly to the steps of the house and back. Then he walked to the steps again and stood, uncertain. But one thought lived in his dizzy brain—this thing must be prevented!

He had been a fool; he would tell her so. He was ill, and she had taught him to love her. He fancied his arguments would have power with her.

The punch he had drunk prevented his realizing the significance of the waiting coupé. He thought only of himself, of how he would impress upon her the wrong she was doing him.

It seemed quite natural for him to be there at that hour. He mounted the steps slowly and rang the bell. Then he waited many minutes, standing with bowed head, repeating to himself what he would say to her—the pitiable account of his ill-health, the emotional declaration of his love.

He looked up and passed his hand over his brow, trying to understand. Why should he permit her to affect him in this way; if they were to part it would be her loss! This sort of thing was folly. Either he was in his dotage or Mrs. White's punch had affected him beyond his knowing.

He descended the steps slowly without any clear intention. When he reached the last step the door opened, and Elizabeth, attired for traveling, appeared, closing it behind her.

She hurried down several steps before appreciating his presence. Then she paused. Lorton was staring at her. As she recognized his face, so haggard and old, her heart sank with a sense of terror.

"Elizabeth," he cried, controlled by a sudden and unconquerable emotion, "I have come to—offer an apology . . . to ask you to forgive me; I——"

His voice broke weakly. He appeared to grow feeble as he spoke. A feeling of compassion frightened her with the dread of possible consequences, and she started forward.

"It is too late," she said, softly. "I forgive, but my life is changed forever."

Suddenly sobered, he stared at her in dismay. She held out her hand.

"Good-bye," she said, gently, "perhaps——"

He caught her hand roughly.

"You mean that you will——"

"She is going with me," said a voice near them; and together they looked upon Paul Edgerton.

For an instant the three stood silent, pale as the dawn now flooding the gray street with the promise of another day.

Lorton dropped the hand he held and stepped back.

"This!" he said, helplessly. "This!"

He heard the repeated word echoing and re-echoing; mingling with a slowly-fading rumble like the prolonged, low, distant thunder of summer.

When he looked up the coupé was gone. For some minutes he stood staring at the gray curb at which he had so often gazed from the drawing-room window while waiting for Elizabeth.

He knew now that his days of waiting for her were over. She had passed out of his life forever.

THE END.

THE NEW YEAR'S BIRTH.

I stood among the frozen drifts
And saw the New Year's birth,
As out of space its starry soul
Came flashing to the earth.
The air was keen, the night was still,
The winds forgot to blow,
The silent tower of Trinity
Was mantled with the snow.

But overhead the planets shone
Like jewels in the dark,
And from their midst a falling star
Shot down the purple arc.
It left behind it as it sped
A trail of silver flame,
As if it wrote upon the night
The letters of its name.

Then all the city's bells rang out
Farewell to Father Time,
Old Trinity above its graves
Sent forth a joyous chime,
And was it fancy, or the souls
Of roses yet unborn,
That crimsoned all the glowing East
And crowned the New Year morn?
The Celebrator.

BROWN—Who invented gas meters?

JONES—Ananias, I think.

The Guesser.

A SONG.

SONG that I sang when I first saw your face—
What was the song to me?
A melody of rare entrancing grace,
With you for the harmony.

Words that I spoke when I looked in your eyes—
What were the words to me?
All of the truth of a love that ne'er dies,
Unheard though that love may be.

Kiss that I gave when I breathed on your lips—
What was the kiss to me?
Ah, more than the life that a poet sips
From immortality.

SONG that I sing as I see you to-day—
What is the song to me?
Only an echo that answers me aye,
And ever so silently.

The Minstrel.

A HIGHER AIM.

FIRST TRAMP—I guess we have enough between us to get a pint.

SECOND TRAMP—Don't talk to me about beer. I'm savin' me money.

FIRST TRAMP—Yer savin' yer money? Fer what?

SECOND TRAMP—Somethin' in the way of a mixed drink.

The Reformer.

AN IMAGE OF CLAY.

ARMS and bust and throat were such as Praxiteles, or, rather, Canova, would have loved to model—human, tender, dimpled, but gleaming, marble-like, in their nobly statuesque lines.

From a curious caprice, said the world, for a tragic reason in reality, Constance Thayer, the fair owner of these sculptured charms, invariably wore black; the sable drapery, unrelieved by a single jewel, throwing the perfect neck and bust into exquisite relief, made their dazzling whiteness seem, if possible, more statuesquely faultless.

As she sat in her box at the opera that night, listening to the haunting strains of Aïda, one read in her face the story of a tragedy, and I was moved to ask the man at my side for her history. I had been so long abroad, I felt an alien among my own people.

"Her story? Yes, you are right; she has one, but too long and too tragic for an *entr'acte*. Let's go out instead and have a drink."

But later, at Jack Denby's chambers, over our cigars and brandy and soda, I learned the woman's history. Briefly, it was this:

"George Thayer, the fair statue's husband," began Denby, "was and is my friend. At college together, and in early manhood we were closer than the proverbial brothers. Our ambition—in spite of his wealth and my poverty—was the same, an artistic career. As usual, poverty spurred me on, and riches handicapped him. To-day he is renowned the world over as a virtuoso and connoisseur. He has done nothing himself, but his collection is worth a king's ransom.

"His chiefest treasure, however, is his wife—the woman you saw to-night in the box—and she, like any other *objet d'art*, was bought; a marble statue, the only one of his collection, by the way, not upon a pedestal!" and Denby smiled a little grimly.

"The daughter of an old and proud but impoverished family of New York, the sale was quickly made, with no suggestion of a virgin victim—wealth and position for beauty and grace—a fair exchange.

"George Thayer was a virtuoso through and through, and like King Candaules of old, he longed to share the beauty of his latest discovered treasure with all the world. He must have her modeled; her sculptured perfection should go down to posterity a rival to the world-famous Venuses of ancient art.

"Consulting me as to a fitting sculptor, I recommended Ernest Cleveland, a young fellow of undoubted genius who had already made a name in Italy. Together we went one morning to his studio, and Ernest Cleveland and Constance Thayer stood face to face. Icily icy, splendidly null, I had always thought her, but that morning the soul of Undine awoke!

"Thayer was difficile. The thing must be perfect; his Venus must be strictly classic. At last, after much discussion, a pose and drapery similar to that of the Arlesian Venus were fixed upon. An artist myself, I was startled by the woman's beauty. As she stood there, half nude in the cold northern light, she might, indeed, have been a marble statue but for the dark, haunting eyes and red, mobile lips. The drapery gathered round her perfect hips fell in classic folds to her feet. She was divinely fair and apparently as free from shame as is the Venus of old Arles herself.

"I can't describe her: Arms such as the world has rarely seen—white, gleaming, slender, tapering at wrist and 'dimpled at elbow'; a neck and bosom like that of Clytie, with that dear delicious hollow at the base of the throat, and the throat itself as firm and round as a marble column. Ah, divine indeed was she!" And Denby leaned back with closed eyes and dreamed, while I lit a fresh cigar.

"Before I left the studio that morning," he continued, filling his glass at the same time, "I knew I had done my friend Thayer an incalculable injury. How did I know it? By instinct, I suppose. Men have their intuitions as well as women. Cleveland's passionate nature was roused, and Undine's newly-awakened soul was troubling her.

"For months the work went on. I looked in from time to time at the growing statue. It seemed a living, breathing thing under Cleveland's plastic fingers. Neither sculptor nor model heeded time. They loved, and the black duenna who sat knitting in the background might have been a piece of bronze for all they regarded her. The very air was surcharged with feeling. I knew a tragedy was brewing. At last, one day it came. The duenna was taken suddenly ill, and Cleveland escorted her to the waiting carriage while Constance left the studio to put on her street gown. Returning for some forgotten trifle, she met Cleveland. The two were alone for the first time. They loved. Each knew the other loved, and a brief mad moment of passion followed.

"I never knew, nor poor Cleveland either, what happened that night between Thayer and Constance. I could only guess by the awful sequel.

"I happened to be in the studio the next morning when husband and wife entered together. The

duenna was ill, Thayer explained with an air of elaborate politeness; he himself would undertake the task of chaperon to-day. Cleveland murmured something in reply, while Constance, colorless as the imaged statue of herself, passed into the dressing-room adjoining. Thayer and I chatted desultorily, while Cleveland silently fingered the wet clay. At last Mrs. Thayer re-entered the room, wearing, as she always did, a long white cloak which completely hid her form. Advancing with steady steps to the raised dais—God, how brave these women are!—she quickly fell into the pose of the Arlesian Venus. With a touch she unfastened the clasp at her throat and the cloak slipped to the floor. We three men stood speechless. I shall never forget the sight that met my eyes, nor the sound that smote my ears. The woman stood revealed in all her beauty, but across the gleaming, perfect shoulders were three long, red, cruel stripes—stripes such as I had seen once long ago on the back of a recalcitrant slave on my father's plantation. With a hoarse, inarticulate cry of rage, and love, and pity, Cleveland sprang forward, only to be pressed back by a hand of iron.

“That hurts you—yes, as it hurts her. It is your work—yours only. You alone are responsible for those stripes. What now?” and Thayer struck the sculptor across the face with his glove.

“There was a moment of deathlike silence. Then the voice of Constance cleft the air like a knife:

“‘Kill him, Ernest—kill him!’

“White, furious, trembling like a woman at the sight of her whom he loved lacerated, beaten, Cleveland turned swiftly and opened a case of revolvers.

“‘Choose,’ he said, offering them to Thayer.

“Calmly, deliberately, as if selecting a cigar, Thayer lifted the pistol from its velvet case. The

two men stepped apart. Both were noted shots and marksmen. It was an even chance.

"One, two, three—a loud report, a cloud of smoke, and Cleveland fell forward, shot through the heart.

"The marble statue shuddered, took one step forward and uttered a stifled shriek:

"'Ernest! Ernest!'

"Thayer, the revolver still smoking in his hand, seized her arm and in a perfectly passionless tone bade her go and dress. Five minutes afterward he led the woman to her carriage, leaving me alone with the dead sculptor and the half-finished image of clay.

"That half-finished statue in marble now stands in Thayer's gallery, not the least of its priceless treasures. And the woman? Ah, well, you saw her to-night. There is no scar on her shoulders. Is there a scar, I wonder, on her heart for my lost friend and her dead lover?"

The Tragedian.

WHAT HE THOUGHT.

FIRST PUBLISHER—What do you think of the action of those Philadelphia school authorities in barring "Les Misérables?"

SECOND PUBLISHER—I think this might be a good time to bring out a new edition.

The Proctor.

TWO SORTS OF BONDS.

"Do you believe in short-time bonds?" said the New York man to the Chicago man.

"Government bonds or matrimonial bonds?" asked the latter.

The Speculator.

BETWEEN THE ACTS.

WIFE—Well, what did you have to drink this time?

HUSBAND—Nothing, dear; I merely strolled through the lobby to show some friends the ruby stud that you had kindly given me for my birthday.

Thus the cloud rolled by, and she beamed upon him.

In his youth he had been a biblical student and had learned that a soft answer turneth away wrath.

After the next act he took whisky unrebuked.

The Philosopher.

APPRECIATES THEIR POWER.

"YES," said the hardware man, "it makes me nervous to hear that a wheelman has punctured his tire."

"How is that?"

"I'm always expecting that some member of the confraternity will inaugurate a movement to prohibit the manufacture of tacks."

The Alarmist.

LOST OPPORTUNITY.

WE stood beneath the mistletoe,
 Her hand I clasped in mine,
 Her red lips pouted temptingly,
 Her breath was sweet as wine;
 O, rapture! then, O bitterness!
 I knew not what to do,
 For I was barely five feet high
 And she was six feet two!

The Midget.

BUBBLE-BALLAD.

GOLDEN-HUED, scent-imbued, the promise of heaven
 in your singing;
 Soft like silk your lips, from my lips the kisses
 wringing;
 Bubblewise laughing eyes, that spur me to moods
 full of madness—
 You are the sea and I am the craft—the craft that
 you spray with gladness.
 Lips to lips, eyes to eyes, and my brain with your
 sheer sweetness reeling,
 You thrill me, you fill me, and my soul is as your
 soul in feeling,
 And my veins and your veins cling together like
 petals of flowers.
 Gleam of you, dream of you—as I think of your
 marvelous powers,
 Half of me sighs for you, and the other half wishes
 you banished,
 How I love, how I loathe you; and—what would I do
 if you vanished?

Champagne!

The Quaffer.

A PRELIMINARY MEASURE.

SENIOR PARTNER—I think we'd better mark those goods up 20 per cent.

JUNIOR PARTNER—Why?

SENIOR PARTNER—The reduction will be more striking when we mark them down.

The Shopper.

REVENGE.

I SAW them together, my lady and he,
On the path in the shadowy wood,
And I hid in the dark of a sheltering tree
And they laughed as they passed where I stood ;
I felt for my dagger, I crept from the shade
And I gave neither warning nor sign ;
In his heart to the hilt I embedded my blade,
And I laughed, for the vengeance was mine !

He spoke not a word, and he lay where he fell ;
I was glad that the villain had died,
I knew him of old, and I knew his tricks well,
And I knew he was tempting my bride ;
I laughed, for I knew I had ended his lies,
But I know now what woman's love is,
For I caught but one glance from my mistress's eyes,
And I groaned, for the vengeance was his !

The Victor.

MUST HAVE BEEN STRAINED.

"You seem to take quite an interest in the old boat," remarked Charon, as he paused for a moment's rest at the shore of the Styx.

"Yes," replied the shade of Napoleon, lounging in the vicinity. "I was wondering whether that tub was able to accommodate the rush when I was on earth. Great guns!" he continued, pensively, "if I were back in Europe now I'd make things so lively that you'd have to exchange that old canoe for a fleet of transatlantic liners."

The Ghost.

WHEN RIGHT IS TORTURE.

It was too late when they met, for she had been married to Jack Alton for a month—a month that had been an awakening for her, in which she saw the man she had wed slowly emerging from the dream-like mist of the days of courtship into the clear, cruel light of truth. Already she had begun to despise him and to look drearily into the coming years as a galley slave might look forward to the deadening years at the oar.

Henri Vibois knew the truth about Jack Alton, and when he met her he felt a touch of pity. Vibois was not a sentimentalist nor much given to consideration of the happiness of anyone, but when he saw Hulda Alton he pitied her.

Every man has respect for purity, hard and careless though he may be, and Hulda Alton combined purity with a strength and gentleness that made her a noble woman. She was of the world, to be sure, and took her part in its frivolities and make-believes, and when she found Jack Alton to be what he was she simply made the best of a bad matter and hid the scar under the robe of womanly dignity and self-restraint. She went about the duties her place in society forced upon her without allowing her inner cares to taint her soul, and to the world she seemed a contented woman.

Henri Vibois, the prospering and courted artist, had drifted through a score of affairs before he met Hulda Alton, and nothing had changed him. "The world is the world," he mused, "but I am Henri Vibois." Women? Well, they were necessities, like bread or roses. Some were bad and some

worse, but it made little difference to him. He cared for none of them.

Perhaps, too, that was the reason he admired Hulda Alton. She was so strong, so safe, so womanly. She was a revelation. He once went so far as to say that he might be induced to marry, if two such women existed. She was the ideal of his thoughtful moments.

Vibois saw her often, and each time he wondered at her self-control. This was indeed the one perfect woman. He knew Jack Alton and he knew the horror a woman so noble must feel toward such a man. He worshipped her for her faithfulness. No other woman of his acquaintance would have long remained faithful to a fellow like Jack Alton. But Hulda Alton remained the strong, pure woman she had ever been. And it was this strength and purity that drew them together.

Hater of women and scoffer at men, Henri Vibois found his admiration for Jack Alton's wife growing rapidly. He spent much time in her company, pleading to his conscience that he drew strength and inspiration from her, while in truth he was but feeding a love that would become a monster if not throttled in its infancy. It was impossible for Hulda not to see. She saw, but gave no sign, and Vibois would not have risked the idol he worshipped by proposing aught that might shatter it. He worshipped her and longed to possess her, but he knew that to possess her meant the death of his ideal.

They were friends, and thus the year passed.

It was at a private view where Vibois had a couple of small landscapes that he first saw sorrow darken her eyes.

She was standing before a panel by Herter when he pushed his way up to her.

"Ah!" she said; "I thought you would be here. That was why I came. I am alone—and you?"

He nodded "Yes."

"Then let us go out. I want to say something to you. There is a cab at the door. I came in a cab to-night—for—reasons."

Vibois handed her into the cab.

"Where, sir?" asked the driver.

"Where?" Vibois asked Hulda.

"Where you please," she replied.

"Delmonico's, then," said Vibois, but she put out her hand.

"No, not there," she said. "Tell him to drive in the park."

The cab rolled away, and for a minute there was nothing said. Then Vibois spoke.

"I know," he remarked.

"But you cannot know all," she cried. "It is too dreadful! I have tried so hard. I have done everything I could, and it has all been very difficult. I have no one to whom I can go for help or advice."

She was leaning back in the corner of the cab, her head thrown back listlessly, while her hands were tearing a rose that had fallen into her lap.

"You can't know how I hate him! how I despise him! You do not know him as I do, nor what it is to live with him day after day and to feel that it must go on for years."

She paused and put her hand to her forehead.

"I have tried," she continued, "but what is the use? Am I to go on year after year suffering as I do? Must I always bear it? Is it right that my life should be made miserable by what is no fault of mine? It is not just! Why should I have no joy, no love in my life? What have I done that I should have to bear it?"

Blessed are those who to such a storm of questions can answer: "It is the hand of God. Have patience and all will be well." Vibois writhed. Why, indeed? And what could he say? Trite platitudes rose to his lips, but he scorned to offer them to a scarred heart. It was not dead words this woman needed. Not shop-worn sentences from the shelves of pale-eyed curates. Fighting alone against a host of sorrows, she craved the living sympathy of a living heart. Vibois was silent, and the cab rolled on past other cabs coming and going. He was trying to formulate his thoughts, to find some phrase that would tell something of his feelings, but not too much. He wanted to help her, but he did not know how.

Hulda was silent, waiting for him to speak. Twice he began, only to stop before he said five words.

"Tell him to drive me home, please," she said at length, and her voice was tinged with disappointment.

"No!" said Vibois, "not yet! Let me do something for you. Let me help you in some way. Don't you see I would gladly do anything in my power, if I but knew how?"

They were passing a lamp and the light fell on her face. He saw the tears in her eyes and her brave lips tremble, and all the love he felt swept over him.

He put out his hand and laid it on one of her hands, but she drew it quickly away.

"Hulda," he said, "let me help you. If in no other way, let the knowledge that I love you—I who have loved no other woman—give you strength. I know how hard it is, I know all you have to bear, and I, too, suffer when you suffer. You are not alone, Hulda, for I love you."

"Stop!" she cried, "you must not! It is not right. I should not have come. But I was so sad, and I did not know where to turn for help. I thought perhaps you could help me, but not that way. I see it all clearly now. I must try to bear it. It is the only way. Tell him to drive me home, please."

When he had left her he drove to his apartments.

"She is a woman, after all," he thought, "but such a woman! She will go on day after day suffering in silence, until——"

For six months Vibois kept out of her way. He knew he loved her too much to run any risks, and he had no wish to shatter his idol, even if by that means he would come into possession of the pieces. He gave himself up wholly to work and meanwhile kept his eye on Jack Alton. The fellow was becoming a drunken wreck.

One day in May he found a note in his mail. It was from Hulda and said only, "Please come this evening." He went.

He found her dressed for the street.

"You once said you loved me," she said. "If you do, take me away. I can bear it no longer. I—oh, Henri, take me away!"

"Hulda," he said, "I love you still and I shall always love you."

"Then take me away," she cried. "Anywhere, I will go anywhere away from him."

Her cheeks were bright and her eyes glistened. Vibois hesitated.

"Do you mean——" he began.

"Yes," she replied, "I mean I will go with you. I love you. See!"

She held out her arms toward him and he could see her bosom rising and falling quickly. He took

her in his arms and she held up her face for the first sweet kiss, and then she looked up smiling.

A cab was waiting and they drove away. She let her head fall on his shoulder, and one arm she slipped around him.

His idol was tottering on the brink.

The cab rolled on. Around many corners, through dark streets and over rough pavements.

"Where is he taking us?" Hulda asked at last.

Vibois looked down into her face and smiled.

"To hell!" he said softly.

"What?" she cried, sitting upright and gazing at him with frightened eyes.

"To the realm of fallen idols," he said, "to the place of tarnished honor, and vain regrets, and long days of self-accusation and growing dislike that lurk in the shadow of lost self-respect, to ——"

"Stop!" she cried, covering her ears with her hands. "Stop! Oh, why do you say such things?"

"It is the truth, dearest," he replied gently, taking her hand; "to all these he is driving us, and I go willingly with you, even to the inner courts of hell. I am no child, Hulda, and I know well all that follows, but were it a thousand times worse I would go if you wished, but with one regret."

"And that?" she asked.

"That the one true woman I have ever known has fallen from her high estate."

"Henri," she said, "tell him to drive me home, please!"

The cab turned and bore them back. He to worship his idol, she to slow and soul-slaying torture. They did not speak as they rolled homeward, and at her door she would not let him help her to alight.

She climbed wearily up the steps and paused a

minute at the door before she let herself in. Inside was all she hated. Outside—well, at least Vibois still loved her, thank God! She had not made him despise her. She had gone far, but he could forgive much. She had been tortured to madness. Yes, it was best!

She entered the hall and met a physician descending the stairs.

"Madam," he said, "I have sad news. Your husband has been shot in an affray. He can scarcely live until morning."

She put her hand on the wall to steady herself and then gazed closely in his face.

"Is it true?" she asked.

"Too true, I fear," he answered.

"Then," she said calmly, "I will go to him at once," and she walked calmly up the stairs as one might go to change one's gown.

The Story-teller.

DIVERGING VIEWS.

MR. BROKERLY (*conciliatingly*)—Well, yes—the new typewriter is very good-looking, it's true, but she's a very capable girl.

MRS. BROKERLY (*savagely*)—I've no doubt, Mr. Brokerly, that she's capable of almost anything!

And there the discussion stopped.

The Clerk.

NEVER UPSIDE DOWN.

"JONESH ish lucky feller."

"Why?"

"Livesh at No. 96."

The Tippler.

HE WANTED TO KNOW.

"WHAT is this?" asked the enlightened African, exhibiting a copy of a New York paper which had somehow come into his hands.

"That is a picture of a football game," answered the missionary.

The African looked at the picture again.

"Has your church no missionaries to send among these people?" he asked, earnestly.

The Half-Back.

IT ROCKED.

GOBANG—What sort of a trip did you have coming from Europe?

UKERDEK—Awful. Sick all the time. There must have been at least a dozen of the fools who rock a boat on board.

The Voyager.

FATHERLY ADVICE.

THE SUITOR—I am so bleased to haf your gon-send! I will take a new interestd in life!

THE FATHER—Take all der interestd you can get, my poy, but keep a sharp eye on der security.

The Watchful One.

THE CAUSE OF HER IGNORANCE.

BENHAM—You don't know the value of money.

MRS. BENHAM—I think I could learn if I only had some.

The Economist.

THE RIVER'S BRIDE.

AN INCIDENT IN LONDON.

A WOMAN with her face hidden in a ragged shawl was crouching and shivering in the corner of a seat on Waterloo Bridge in one of those embrasures which look as though hewn out of solid granite, and even in the sun seem so cold and hard and comfortless that they would scarcely invite the most footsore wayfarer to repose. Still less now, on a raw November night when the rain was falling drearily and the hours for regular traffic were long past. The few hasty passengers, as they staggered by, wrestling with their turbulent umbrellas, never noticed the dark and shapeless heap of misery huddled under the shadow of the heavy parapet.

Above the pattering of the rain and the quarterly boom of Big Ben there were few sounds but the intermittent clash and rumble of a benighted cab or the hurrying footsteps of some weary journalist in the Strand. The roar and hum of the busy streets had paused for a while, and the throbbing of the great city's woeful heart had ceased to beat its labored rhythm on the waking ear, save hard by in the ever-vigilant citadel of the Press, where the sentinels never sleep, and whose busy slaves toil with their Briarean hands and watch with their eyes of Argus every hour of the day and night all the long year through. Elsewhere every window was blank, and the public lamps threw only a dull misty glow on the muddy streets and made blacker

the shadows of overhanging masonry which spanned the glistening puddles. The gas jets on the bridge were flickering in the gusty wind, hissing and blowing like some strange monster of the deep, but adding little cheer to the gloomy night.

The dark, flowing river below seemed alone endowed with life and strength as tide and stream bore it in triumphant unison to the open sea. Its sullen muttering, as it lapped round the piers of stone and bruised its tiny wavelets in a vain endeavor to thrust the obstructing pillars from its path; the solemn sweep of its broad waters as they rolled onward in their unimpeded course, and its rippling splashes against the swaying coal barges moored above, were all blended into one harsh monotonous voice that chanted a chorus to the dreams of drowsy hunger and this is what it sang:

See, a cottage door in a smiling hamlet that nestles half asleep in the broad lap of stern gray wolds. In front a trim garden, where earnest bees sound a note of warning to the fragrant mignonette and great golden sunflowers hang their staring faces to the crimson west. Bright dahlias nod a greeting in the vesper breeze and a solemn stillness soothes the sense of loss and melancholy at the summer's waning season.

Standing in the doorway, and leaning against her mother's knee, is a little flaxen-haired girl in blue frock and white pinafore, a chain of daisies round her dimpled neck and, in her mottled fist, a bunch of scarlet poppies. Her other hand guards her eyes from the setting sun, as she gazes, laughing and expectant, through the shade of some noble elms which line a narrow, deep-rutted track leading to half-cut corn-fields.

Through the open door is a glimpse of a neat

room beyond, where supper is ready with all the frugal comforts that poor but loving hands can furnish to ease the burden of harvest toil.

Suddenly the whirr of the reaping machines stops and a dreadful scream rends the evening calm. The woman turns pale and falters as the child looks up into her face with fearful inquiry in her eyes. Shouts of anxious men echo faintly through the perfumed air and presently a crowd of laborers come swiftly down the lane, carrying tenderly in their bare and sunburnt arms a mangled corpse. There has been an accident and death. The widow starts forward, but at the gate reels and clings to it for support as the body is borne silently and sadly within.

The child looks on in awe-struck wonder. She follows the little procession through the cottage door and seizes the cold heavy hand that drags the ground. Though no accustomed pressure answers to her clasp, she holds it still, until clay-stained fingers gently take it from her and lay it with reverent care upon the crushed and lifeless breast. They lead her to the dry-eyed mother, whose silent agony is like to burst her heart. Her little daughter's hands, wandering over the hushed, set face and bloodless lips, touch the spring of grief, and tears at last bring refreshment to the parching soul. Dost know that child?

I see her next a tall and slender girl, striving to interpose her youthful aid between her mother and the drunken husband of a second marriage. His brutal violence is turned upon her, and she falls stunned to the ground. In the night she rises stealthily. Wiping her blood-stained face, she drags her bruised limbs to the door and wanders out into the darkness, never to return.

Step by step I can trace her weary tramp, relieved only by the hospitality of casual wards or the more generous shelter of a wayside hedge until, in some squalid suburb, she finds rest in an attic and broken victuals in a cellar as a household drudge.

I find her later, promoted in the ranks of service and in a neat cap and apron with happy, comely face, taking pride in her domestic duties at a stately mansion. On Sundays she walks out with a decent tradesman, who loves her truly and is saving money for their wedding.

That is not he in evening dress, with eager eyes and vinous breath who has his arms so close about her and is whispering in her ear. It is the son of the great banker in whose house she is employed.

I see her next, lying dazed and tearful upon a couch in a gaudy boudoir. She wears a rich and brilliant robe, but its torn lace and missing buttons are tokens of careless indolence and loss of self-respect. Her hair, too, is brighter and her cheeks are redder than Nature ordered. An empty champagne bottle is on a table by her side, while rough bailiffs, with hats upon their heads and notebooks in their hands, fulfil the sordid functions of their office.

She is so much changed that I hardly should have known her. There is no trace now of honest poverty or happy innocence. Still less when I meet her next in draggled finery, cursing two hard-featured men, who lift her from the kennel of the vice-worn street and tear her away to feed the vermin of a drunkard's cell.

I see her again and again the heroine of midnight brawls and police-court infamies, and now I have marked her for my own. I have but to wait for such a night as this, when hunger, drink and pain shall have ripened her fully for my chill embrace.

Come, my chosen ! Let me woo thee to my sighing breast ; let me clasp thee to my murmuring heart. It has won many such a bride before, and shall win many yet. So long as this thronging hive of men endures, which owes to me its fame and wealth, its annual tribute to the human Minotaur and me must be so surely paid.

Be not doubtful of thy charms and dower ! Thou needst no bridal veil but rags, no ornaments but disease, no wedding-shift but shame, to make thee welcome to my winding arms.

Hark ! Dost hear the beat of footsteps on the sloppy stones ? Hurry, hurry or it will be too late ! Come to the lover who awaits thee, and whose kiss is peace and rest for ever more !

The warning tread grows louder.

A fluttering figure staggers up and stands poised for an instant on the slippery parapet. It utters one despairing cry and tosses its wasted arms toward heaven, which shrouds all hope in black and tearful mourning for a soul that is past the world's redemption. Then for the fearful jump and headlong plunge down, down into the yearning flood !

The Law's dull mercenary hears with stolid inattention the loud signal of the River's union with his bride, but whether its consummation was all the bridegroom promised, who can tell ?

The Mourner.

HARDLY PRACTICAL ADVICE.

CLERGYMAN—You should love your neighbor as yourself.

SMALL BOY—That's easy enough to say, but you don't know our neighbors.

The Smiler.

THE GIFT QUESTION.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY GETS A PEEP AT HER PROSPECTS.

MRS. GOLIGHTLY (*with a bewitching smile*)—What are you going to give me for Christmas deary?

MR. GOLIGHTLY—Er—um—um—I don't know. About what you deserve, I guess. Have you been a good little wife all year?

MRS. GOLIGHTLY—Of course, you dear old goosey!

MR. GOLIGHTLY—Been flirting some lately with Dicky Doolittle, haven't you?"

MRS. GOLIGHTLY—Well, just a little bit. But that's all off now.

MR. GOLIGHTLY—Didn't I see you with Jack Dashleigh in the conservatory at Mrs. High-Fives the other day?

MRS. GOLIGHTLY—I—I—guess maybe you did. But I mean to cut him after this. I do, really.

MR. GOLIGHTLY—Let me see. What was your last bill from Worth—\$8,000?

MRS. GOLIGHTLY (*tearfully*)—Yes, dear, that was it, but I won't be nearly so extravagant any more.

MR. GOLIGHTLY—And those Tiffany diamonds—that tiara, you know, wasn't it \$10,000?

MRS. GOLIGHTLY—Ten thousand! five hundred, dear; but, oh, I won't get another diamond all next year! Now, tell me, sweet, what are you going to give me for Christmas, in view of all my good promises and my pledges to reform?

MR. GOLIGHTLY—Um—um—you deserve something, surely. I think I'll give you—let me see—ah, I have it, dearest! I'll give you the glad hand!

The Philanthropist.

THE GOLDEN KEY.

A STORY OF CINDERELLA AND PRINCE CHARMING.

"WILL you take a little journey with me, Cinderella?" the Prince asked, persuasively.

"Where?" said Cinderella, pensively, poking the smouldering coals with the toe of her shabby shoe.

"Into fairyland, dearie."

"It does not exist, except in the imagination, and I am tired of make-believe—I want something real."

"Are you in earnest, Cinderella, truly in earnest, at last?"

"No sensible person is in earnest about anything." She dug her foot spitefully into the fire.

"I can make the journey real, Cinderella, and it will be better than fairyland."

"I thought we settled that long ago," the girl said, impatiently; "it's a tiresome subject."

"Aren't you a little cross to-night, Cinderella? What have I done, dear?" the Prince asked, penitently.

"Done?" she cried, passionately. "Everything that is fine and loving and good; but I am not satisfied; do you understand? To-night I would go to the ends of the earth with you. I am tired of being respectable. To-morrow I should loathe you for taking me. Now do you understand?"

"Don't say things like that to me, Cinderella. It is like putting a cup to the lips of a thirsty man and then snatching it away."

"Would you have him drink poison?"

"A man can die only once."

She went over to the window and gazed out on the brick walls opposite without apparently being aware of their existence. A wild, reckless mood was on her, born of the discouragements of the day. She was tired of the struggle and strife of life, tired of adjusting herself to her environment, tired of being conventional. What she told him was true. Here within her reach was freedom, luxury, congeniality, love—Prince Charming standing with open arms. She had but to put out her hand, and the grim scene would change as if by enchantment. All the rebellion in her clamored for a richer, fuller life; a sob rose in her throat and her eyes filled with tears. "Dear God," she cried, "save me from the temptation!"

"The Prince came over and put his hand on her shoulder, turning her about so that he saw the tears. "Little one," he said, "we are not children to misunderstand each other."

He took out his handkerchief and wiped her eyes gently, as if she were indeed a child. "I am not going to take you away, dear; do you know why?" he asked, endeavoring to speak lightly. "Because of the to-morrow when you would loathe me. That would be worse than death."

He drew her back to the fire and put her into a chair, pulling up a stool on which he sat at her feet. Then he took her hands in his, and the clasp of his fingers seemed to quiet the girl and give her courage.

She bent her head and kissed his hair before she spoke. "You always understand my moods, dear. See, I am reasonable and repentant now. Ah, you help me so!"

"Do I, sweet? But not as you help me. Sometimes," he said, earnestly, "I think I cannot endure

this life apart from you another day, and then I remember all the wise and beautiful little things you say to me, and I take a fresh grip and go on."

"It is curious," the girl said, slowly, "how desperately one has to strive to do right. We fight, fight, fight, and for what? To die with a broken spirit at the end."

"You don't mean that, Cinderella?"

"No, I don't," she said, remorsefully. "There is always the chance of slaying the enemy."

"That sounds like my brave little girl. Do you know her, Cinderella?" The Prince looked up into her eyes.

"I have heard you talk about her."

"She is everything one loves; sweet and tender and strong in the face of temptation. No saint, mind you, but no sinner either. Do you like her, Cinderella?"

"I detest her," she said, savagely; "I know her weaknesses."

"Out of her weakness comes great strength—for herself and the man who loves her. Won't you like her a little, Cinderella?" he pleaded, tightening his hold of her hands.

"Y-e-s," she answered, reluctantly; "to please you I would do anything."

"Then smile at me, dear, and we'll be happy ever after."

"More fairy tales!" she exclaimed with a laugh, as she pulled her hands away.

"Cinderella, I've got an idea! Isn't it wonderful!" he said, gaily.

"I should think so! What will you do with it?"

"Give it to you for safe keeping."

"Suppose you never get it back?"

"Oh, I'll get another," he said, confidently.

"Impossible!" derisively.

"You should treat your elders with more respect, Cinderella."

"Have you lost your idea?" she asked, flipantly.

"You saucy jade! I'm going to run away with you just for to-night. There, it's out. Will you listen, Cinderella?"

"If you promise not to be serious."

"How can I, over so frivolous a matter? We'll have our little journey, after all. First, you're coming to dine with me, then we'll go for a drive in the Park, then——"

"Then the clock will strike twelve. But I never dine out, Prince Charming."

"Are you afraid of the world, Cinderella?"

"No."

"Or of me?"

She shook her head.

"I would not make you the subject of talk. You *trust* me, Cinderella?"

"Absolutely." Her voice had a proud, triumphant ring.

The man laid his face on her hands. The moment was laden with a delicious silence. Presently she raised his head and laughed in a tremulous fashion suggestive of tears that had not risen to the surface.

"We're a bundle of inconsistencies taking our flight into fairyland in such a ponderous fashion. They won't let us in!"

"Oh, yes, they will—I have the golden key. We will go to a little Bohemian place I know, where Madame, in an immaculate white apron, smiles benignly upon her guests. Shall we start at once," he said, rising.

"But I have not a festive gown."

"As if you were not adorable as you are!"

"Pooh!" making a little *move* at him; "I am not even presentable except to a prejudiced person like you."

"Then we'll call in the fairy godmother."

"She is here. Wait, and you will see."

She vanished from the room, and presently returned, laughing merrily.

"How do you like me?" sweeping him a curtsy.

He surveyed her from the crown of her dainty hat to the toe of her pointed shoe, marvelling at the transformation.

"Dame Fashion has stolen you away from me." He gazed at her reproachfully.

"Are we going to dine, Prince Charming," she said.

He was almost jealous of the covert glances of admiration bestowed upon her by the persons dining about them, and stared haughtily at one who, with frank good nature, dared look more often than the rest. Cinderella, all unconscious, glowed with happiness, and her eyes shone with a lustrous light.

"You look like an elf," he said, filling her glass with champagne.

"And I feel like a princess royal."

"Will your Gracious Highness deign to look at a slave?"

"I do not see him," she answered, looking into his eyes.

He leaned forward, holding her gaze by the intensity of his. "I would give my kingdom to kiss you!" he said.

She threw back her head and smiled bewitchingly. "Reckless Prince, what is your kingdom?"

"Two principalities. One of the world, where

success crowns a man king—a barren soil, yielding only of necessity. Envy, hatred and malice grow there, born of ambition's strife. The bitter irony of Fate hovers round the throne. The other"—his voice grew soft and low.

"Yes," she whispered.

"The other is a land of golden dreams, where sweet-smelling flowers blossom, holding in their hearts the imperious bee. The wind whispers love to the leaves that tremble and flutter in response to his ardent wooing. A princess reigns over the kingdom—sweetest of all the flowers——"

"Holding in her heart the imperious bee." Her eyes were dim with unshed tears as she looked across at him. "We are growing absurdly solemn," she said.

When he put her into a hansom and they went bowling into the Park she clapped her hands in childish glee. "This is better than mice and a chariot, Prince Charming."

"You like my idea, Cinderella?"

"It was an inspiration! I am in love with your creative genius, you imaginative man!"

"Do you remember what I said a while ago, Cinderella?"

She leaned back on the cushions without answering.

"Will you kiss me just once, dear," he pleaded, wistfully.

"Do the bees in your country sting?" she asked, turning her head away.

The Prince looked out on the road ahead with a sudden dull pain in his heart. Cinderella slipped her hand in his with a pressure that pleaded forgiveness, and he, keenly sensitive to her touch, clasped his fingers over hers in a hold that betokened under-

standing. So they rode for a while without other speech than that which the heart interprets.

It was Cinderella's voice that stole in on the silence. "You have made it true, Prince Charming. The principality of golden dreams exists to-night for you and me, but after——"

"Must you finish it, Cinderella?"

"No; because you understand."

"You mean"—speaking slowly—"I am to cultivate the barren soil of my worldly kingdom, and govern it as befits a man whom success has crowned king. Is that it, my fairy princess?"

"Yes."

"If I live there wisely according to your lights, which are my guiding stars, I may sometimes wander into my flowery domain and worship the princess who sits on the throne?"

"She is not a princess to worship; her throne is too lowly down, among the flowers which she loves. But she will make the principality a haven of rest to the weary Prince, and send him back full of wisdom to govern the world." Her voice was sweet and strong with a promise of days to come."

He lifted her hand to his lips.

"I shall leave the key to fairyland with you, Cinderella."

"Are you sure I'm a trustworthy person?" she asked, throwing sentiment to the winds. "I might lock you out."

"I am not afraid."

"You are a hopelessly conceited person."

"Am I not?" complacently. "It comes of my being loved by a princess."

"Who is of your creating. Take me home, Prince Charming."

He lifted her out of the hansom and stood with

her a moment inside her door. She drew down his face and kissed him between the eyes. "To sweeten your way," she said, softly, "into that barren land which you will make a richer kingdom, the light of a great purpose will illumine the throne. So, in the success which crowns you King I shall be happy ever after."

"The bees in my country do not sting, Cinderella."

Her lips parted in a tremulous smile.

"Happy is the flower that holds one in her heart."

As he passed into the street the clock on the old church tower monotonously droned the hour of twelve.

The Romancer.

RUIN.

DESIRE

Jostled Satire.

Then the great god, Unrest,

Took fierce possession. 'Twas idle play with keen-edged tools

That sharper grew

As inward through her breast

The three waged war. (How true that of this earth the fools

Are not those only who are heedless, but those, too, forsooth,

Who hug their forms closely !)

Then Passion came,

And of the four made one—itsself, in very truth,

And watched with eyes hung heavily

The finish of the game.

The Cynic.

MY WINTER GIRL.

My Winter girl!
 Of her I sing,
 And at her feet bouquets I fling.
 Old earth its iciest dress may wear;
 To me there's sunshine everywhere,
 For in her eyes are thoughts of Spring!

'Tis true that all my wealth takes wing
 When her unto the play I bring
 And buy her birds and bottles rare.

Not to a dollar can I cling—
 She wants a rose and now a ring,
 And eke a diamond for her hair;
 But somehow, hang it, I don't care,
 For she's too sweet for anything.

My Winter Girl!

The Icicle.

THE POINT OF VIEW.

"THE garters that you gave me dear,"
 She said, with blushes bright,
 And manner shy and twinkling eye,
 "Are simply out of sight!"

"So I observe, my pretty maid,"
 Said I, with meaning glance;
 "Suppose you try, since no one's nigh,
 An up-to-date skirt dance!"

The Saucy Devil.

CAUSE OF DEATH UNKNOWN.

ABE LINKUM JOHNSING—Did yo' heah about Gawge Wash'ton Jackson how he done die aftah he eat two big 'possums an' a whole peck o' sweet potatoes?

HENRY CLAY JONES—Nuh, I didn't heah about dat. What was de mattah wid him?

The Stockjoker.

JUST A SCHEME, OF COURSE.

TUPENNY—Here is an account in the paper of a man who was shipwrecked in mid-ocean and cast away on a desert island with another man's wife.

MRS. TUPENNY—The wretch! I hope his wife got a divorce from him!

The Lawyer.

A WAY OF SETTLING THEIR DIFFERENCES.

FIRST CLERGYMAN—I don't think much of your preaching.

SECOND CLERGYMAN—I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll bet you two to one that I've saved more souls than you have.

The Evangelist.

HIS FAVORITE WEAPON.

"THEY say that the pen is mightier than the sword."

It was General Weyler who meditated thus. Then he added:

"But I can give both of them points and win with my typewriter."

The Correspondent.

HER WAY.

SHE is really a generous person—that is, as far as her slender purse permits—a bundle of charming contradictions and erratic impulses, with a regiment or at least a squad, of admirers in constant service, and every day a fresh scheme for some charitable adventure. How far these schemes materialize, or what amount of good they accomplish, I have never been able to ascertain. Lately I have been led to speculate whether they all reached the same happy end in which her newest charity came to a finish.

A year or so ago she told me she had hit upon the idea of putting by every dime that found its way to her purse, and saving them for a certain charity that she had in mind. “Because, don’t you see, a few dimes a week, more or less, won’t make any great difference in my wealth, and at the end of the year I’ll have a tidy little sum for my conscience fund. *Comprenez?*” When I met her a fortnight later and inquired about that fund, she held up her dainty hands in deprecation.

“Would you believe it, the very first week I began to save, I found that I had taken in—what do you think?—\$5.60 in dimes! Every penny I got in change, it seemed to me, was a dime; and on the Saturday, to cap the climax, a tradesman gave me in change a whole dollar in dimes! Of course, with my small income, this couldn’t go on, so I’ve had to substitute nickels.”

But evidently, this didn’t succeed either. As she explained afterward, she had no idea there were such quantities of nickels in circulation until she began

to save them. "Of course, I might have guessed," she admitted, "that there were twice as many as dimes, since it takes two of them to make a dime, and of course, one gets them ever so much more frequently, being of smaller denomination!" So she had really been forced to fall back upon pennies. And she found that was a huge success. So perfectly easy to put all the pennies aside, and then coppers are such humiliating coins, one was always glad to get them out of one's pocketbook. Well, I didn't see this precious little Christian again until I met her at a golf tea last week at Southampton. Apropos *de rien*, I asked—"And that charity fund, how's that getting on?" She blushed, and then, with a little laugh of confusion, she opened her purse. Nothing but pennies, a hundred seemed to me. "Do you know" (she always had a pretty trick of confessing her faults), "do you know, I've found the penny fund so awfully convenient to borrow from, that I—I haven't given one cent to my charity! Just at present I'm dead broke—this hat, one of Virot's, you know what that means—I couldn't resist it—so I've had to fall back upon the fund for car fare. At Christmas I found I'd put aside \$22.74—that is, not put aside exactly; but in my expense book, under several dates, I have: 'Owe to penny fund, \$2.00; to penny fund, \$3.50, \$1.00, 50, and so on.' Of course, I fully intend to pay it all back as soon as I can spare it, but just now—well, these are the last," she added desperately, and rolling them out she counted ninety-two pennies, the fruit of two year's deprivations! Still no one looking at that bewitching little face would have suggested for a moment that she might have gone without that Virot hat.

The Philanthropist.

AMERICANS AT COURT.

A MOSCOW—COLUMBIAN DRAMA IN THREE ACTS AND A SHAKEDOWN.

ACT I.—A YEAR AGO.

SCENE—*The Grand Drawing-Room of a Grand Palace in Moscow Rented for one week for A Million Dollars by a Party of Simple American Grandees Who Wish to Rehearse for their Appearance at the Coronation of the Czar. Crowns, Medals, Jewels, and Strips of Cloth-of-Gold are Lying about in Heaps, and the Tables and Carpet are Littered with Dictionaries and Books on Etiquette. Mr. Broken-bridge, the United States Minister, Sits on the Floor Trying on a New Pair of Silk Stockings (Opera Length) that he Proposes to Wear With His Court Suit, and Mr. Johnny Blowgun, the Ambassador from Nowhere in Particular, is engaged in the pastime known to his American associates as "chewing the rag." A Piano-wagon in the street is playing "The Star-Spangled Banner."*

MR. JOHNNY BLOWGUN (*furiously, and addressing Gen. Alex. McDuck, a fine old soldier, who has confessed several times to being somewhat sick of his present occupation*)—Look here, General; you may be hot stuff and all that; but what I want to know is, where do I come in?

GENERAL MCDUCK (*wearily*)—What's eating you now, Johnny? Fleas? Or have you been hitting that *vodka* again and imagining there's a mouse's nest in your brain-pan? And now I come to think of it, what have you got all those cigarette buttons sewed on your coat for?

MR. BLOWGUN (*gnashing his teeth*)—Cigarette buttons! Why, man, those are my medals.

GENERAL McDUCK—Huh! Where did you get 'em?

MR. BLOWGUN—I inherited some of them, and the others—these tin ones—are some of those I won for my dexterity with the skillet when I camped out with the Ohio militia. But I've got a right to wear all the medals I've got. I believe it, for my mother told me so.

GENERAL McDUCK (*sadly*)—Well, let it go at that. But, say, Johnny, my time's a little valuable this morning. I've got to train a few noble-minded and God-fearing American citizens in the art of kissing the earth in the presence of royalty. Won't you be generous and try to tell me in as few words as possible just what it is that you're after?

MR. BLOWGUN (*diffidently*)—Haw! The—haw!—the fact is, I came to consult you about my uniform.

GENERAL McDUCK (*startled*)—About your what?

MR. BLOWGUN—My uniform. Why shouldn't I wear a uniform, if I want to?

GENERAL McDUCK (*growing purple in the neck*)—Where did *you* ever do any fighting?

MR. BLOWGUN (*modestly*)—Lots of places. I got into a fight at a horse show once, and the people that saw me get licked talked about the beauty of the sight for years. I fought the Demon Rum at West Point, and the noise of the conflict sounded like the blasting of rock in the Palisades. I can fight three square meals a day and get away with 'em. If anybody in Moscow is entitled to wear the trappings of a warrior, I am.

GENERAL McDUCK (*kindly*)—Well, Johnny, I guess your record as a scrapper has been established. But there are other Americans here waiting to offer

testimony of their fidelity to their sturdy republican bringing-up. Go to the Czar's show in any sort of uniform you like. Paint your feet green and go in your shirt if you want to. I won't kick. But give me a rest now or I'll choke. (*Mr. Blowgun retires with a howl of joy to hunt up his uniform, and Mrs. Trotter Charmer, a Perfect Lady from Chicago, advances timidly toward the stuffed arm-chair in which General McDuck is seated.*)

MRS. CHARMER (*sweetly*)—Am I correct, sir, in supposing you to be the chief McDuck and bottle-washer of this show?

GENERAL MCDUCK (*with great suavity*)—In some respects, yes, madam. True, it is the Czar who is giving the show, but I am running the American end of it. All the Americans in Moscow seem to think I'm a good thing. I suppose they think the fact that my name's McDuck gives them the right to chase me. What can I do for you?

MRS. CHARMER (*exhibiting the smile that never fails to dazzle Chicago's 4,000 until that body doesn't know the difference between street-railway stock and pigs' feet*)—I would like to witness the coronation.

GENERAL MCDUCK (*dreamily*)—Of course you would. They all want that. If the entire aristocracy of the United States knew what a cinch on social preferment a few Americans were going to have at this show they'd sink a fleet of ships getting over here. Let me see: do you want to go to the coronation in a uniform or just in silk breeches with gold buckles at the knees?

MRS. TROTTER CHARMER (*appealingly*)—Oh, sir!

GENERAL MCDUCK (*confused*)—I beg your pardon. I dreamed I was talking to Johnny Blowgun. You were saying, Madam—

MR. TROTTER CHARMER (*who has overheard the*

reference to "silk breeches" and is pleased with the idea)—Say, I keep a hotel in Chicago, but I'm not stuck up, for all that. I bought a pair of silk breeches for myself and (*advancing in a menacing attitude*) I'm going to wear 'em in spite of hell. There's a dandy velvet coat, cut swally-tail, that goes with 'em, and I think by the time I'm rigged out with the coat and the pants and the gold-garter buckles and the pumps and other things, I'll be fit to go to any court in the land. Still, I'm a big bug in Chicago, and I ought to have an embloom of some sort, so that the Roosian nobullity will spot me. Say, can't I wear a crown, or something?

MRS. CHARMER (*fondly*)—Trotter, I always knew you would prove a credit to my training. (*To General McDuck*) Can't we fix him in some way, General?

GENERAL MCDUCK (*aside, miserably*)—If I could only drown him! (*Aloud*) We will try, my dear Mrs. Charmer, but—heavens! What's this?

MINISTER BROKENBRIDGE (*who has finally succeeded in getting into his opera stockings, and stands erect in all the pride of his five-feet-four of unsullied American manhood before his fellow-Americans*)—How do you think I'll look at the coronation? Don't you think I'll knock 'em silly in these duds? (*The assembled Americans take one glance at Mr. Brokenbridge's get-up, and gasp for breath. The Minister wears a silk coat that is a mass of gold lace, a sky-blue waistcoat with onyx buttons, black satin pantalettes with a fringe of silk at the knees, the stockings aforesaid, and patent-leather pumps with buckles as big as soup-plates. The effect is tremendous.*)

GENERAL MCDUCK (*recovering himself, though his breathing is heavy and labored*)—Great Scott, Broken-

bridge, I nearly fell in a fit, and God knows that's more than you did when you fell into those clothes. Say, are you going to the cathedral that way?

MINISTER BROKENBRIDGE (*with placid self-satisfaction*)—Of course I am. If it's the proper caper to wear good clothes at this show, I guess no true American is going to get left. But you haven't told me how you like my togs. Speak up, some of you.

MRS. CHARMER (*smiling amiably and adjusting her pince-nez*)—They are very becoming, Mr. Brokenbridge, I am sure.

MR. CHARMER—Your clothes is a little finer than mine, Brokenbridge, but if I don't beat you on the point of legs, damn me. Then, too, your breeches is too tight. If you was to sit down too sudden I should be afeard of the consequences. What should you say, General?

GENERAL MCDUCK (*thoughtfully*) — Considering the amount of bowing you dignified American democrats are going to do, I should recommend you all to have your breeches fitted with elastic seats and your noses with rubber guards. Contact direct with the dirt or the pavement doesn't add to the comfort of one's nose. And I suppose you are all aware that when you bow to a titled person it is expected that your noses shall scratch gravel in every instance. But here comes the deluge. It is time for the daily rehearsal, I fancy.

(*Some 200 Americans of both sexes and of long ancestry enter, and for three hours, under the direction of General McDuck, practise the art of walking backward and of tying their spinal columns into knots, indicative of respect for their social superiors. They wear gorgeous court costumes, which they touch up, at times, with the jewels and dry goods that are*

lying about the apartment. Detachments of the Moscow rabble, and a few liveried servants sent from the Palace to wait on the more distinguished Americans, gaze curiously through the windows at the strange and edifying spectacle of a great nation's proudest people making asses of themselves. At a pause in the exercises there is a loud crash. The piano-wagon that was playing "*The Star-Spangled Banner*" breaks in two, and a stuffed eagle over the mantelpiece falls to the floor as Mr. Johnny Blowgun, the Ambassador from Nowhere in Particular, reenters.)

MR. JOHNNY BLOWGUN—(triumphantly)—NOW, GET ONTO MY SHAPE, AND FALL DEAD!!!

(The company stands petrified for a moment, and then breaks into wailings of astonishment and envy. Mr. Blowgun is attired in the full uniform of a General of the United States Army. He has all his inherited medals on, and wears a liver-pad of pure gold, embellished with a portrait of himself as an Ohio militiaman in the act of charging on a beer mug.)

MINISTER BROKENBRIDGE (gloomily)—I might as well go and hock my court suit. My sky-blue vest isn't in it with all that yellow paint.

MR. TROTTER CHARMER—Even my Chicago nerve won't stand this. It's a darned shame.

MR. JOHNNY BLOWGUN (who manifestly enjoys the sensation he has created)—How do you like my curves, General?

GENERAL McDUCK (making feeble passes before his eyes with his hands)—Johnny, I give up. Run the rest of the show to suit yourself. (Faints.)

ACT II.—ONE YEAR LATER.

Letter from Mr. Johnny Blowgun to General McDuck.

MY DEAR GENERAL—My compliments to you, and you are an imbecile and a bluff. You never were a soldier to amount to anything, and when you say I didn't look out of sight in that uniform you prove yourself a more accomplished prevaricator than Ananias. The entire Russian court was mashed on me, and the Czarina begged me on her knees for my photograph. The trouble with you fellows was that you were all so jealous of the figure I cut that you couldn't look at me without undergoing severe abdominal pains. I cough on your alleged army record, sir, and I tweak your nose—by mail. Never let me hear from you again unless it be a request that I give you another stroke of paralysis with the sight of me in uniform.

Yours, with hatred,

JOHN BLOWGUN,

BUNGTOWN, O., May, '97.

ACT III.—FOUR DAYS LATER.

General McDuck to a Reporter.

“Yes, sir, Johnny Blowgun is the son of his father. The latter was a great man, but I don't go much on the kid. No, I won't fight a duel with him this summer. If I decide to kill him I shall buy some insect powder and sprinkle it on his neck. He will hear from me later.”

FINALE—THE SHAKEDOWN.

Telegram from McDuck, New York, to McKinley, Washington:

“Does my brother get the Attorney-Generalship?”

*Telegram from McKinley, Washington, to
McDuck, New York:*

“Nit.”

*Telegram from Blowgun, Youngstown, O., to
McKinley, Washington:*

“Do I get the Austrian Mission?”

*Telegram from McKinley, Washington, to Blowgun,
Youngstown, O.:*

“NOT IN A THOUSAND YEARS!”

The Smiler.

AT THE BURLESQUE.

SHE—Do you like frogs’ legs?

HE (*with a lickerish look at the stage*)—Well, there are others.”

The Connaisseur.

GOOD NEWS FOR HIM.

“You are destined to marry riches,” the seeress said, “but——”

“But what?”

“Death will claim you two years before the event.”

The Stringer.

ROMANCE EN VOYAGE.

HE kissed her on the sly,

He kissed her on the deck,

He kissed her on their parting

And he kissed her on the neck.

The Smacker.

THE GILDED SWORD.

SHE wore a wreath of ivy leaves
About her golden head,
And little shafts of sunlight ran
To catch her as she sped.
Beneath the ancient oak he stood,
The manor's youthful lord,
And waited with a jealous frown,
His hand upon his sword.

"Thine arms are white as lily leaves;
Thy face is fair to see;
But if thou wilt not be my love,
None other's shalt thou be!"
As thus the anger of his soul
In bitter words he poured,
He stepped across the narrow path
And barred it with a sword.

Then from her throat with fingers rude
He plucked the dewy rose,
And rent her silken robe, and bared
Her bosom's virgin snows;
And as a mighty wind arose,
And through the forest roared,
He found the throbbing heart beneath,
And pierced it with his sword.

The sharp and slender point within
Her fair young body broke,
He bent and kissed the gaping wound,
While loudly groaned the oak;

And thrice he kissed the pallid lips,
Before he turned the sward,
And thrust into a shallow grave
The victim of his sword.

He hastened to his stately home,
Across his broad green lands,
And in a silver basin washed
The murder from his hands;
And, climbing to the garret dim,
Beneath a loosened board,
High up against the sloping eaves,
He hid the fatal sword.

The hilt grew green with verdigris,
The blade grew red with rust;
The manor passed to other hands;
Its haughty lord was dust.
A pretty bride, one rainy day,
The attic rooms explored,
And in its secret hiding-place
She found the broken sword.

Where still the oaks in deepest shade
Their solemn branches wave,
With maiden bones the rusty point
Is mouldering in the grave.
But in a silken-hung boudoir,
With dainty trifles stored,
To Cupid's hip with ribbons bound,
It hangs, the gilded sword.

The Balladist.

CURIOUS FACTS AND RECORDS RELATING TO OLD NEW YORK.

THE ancient city of New York is not dying through the consolidation with other cities, but expanding. Its original territorial limits were the boundaries of Manhattan Island, but long since annexation was made of a large section north of the Harlem river. Now a vaster territory, teeming with a great and busy population, is added. A new Paris looks backward to an old Paris and an extended London to an old London, and so, as in the order of all great and progressive cities, New York is about to become a Greater New York. There is no decay or death in it, but there is growth and life of the most significant kind.

As we are about to open this new page of history, and no living citizen of the present day can conceive or predict the glory of these pages in the long future, it is not without interest to turn to the quaint pages of the earlier times and instruct, or perhaps only amuse, ourselves with the ways and doings of those who lived in the primitive city.

Wall street is to-day a great financial centre of the country and the world. The following record of a survey made of the north side of the street a little over 200 years ago gives no indication of its present renown and influence, but is very interesting:

“By vertue of a warrant from the honorable Coll. Thomas Dongan, Governor Generall of his Majesties Coll. of New York, etc., bearing date of 15th instant, to me directed,

"Have laid out ye North East side of ye Wall street, beginning at ye Westernmost corner of ye Butcher's Pen, and then running by an angle of 313 deg., or Northwest by West nine deg., fifteen minutes, Northerly foure hundred twenty-three foot, to ye farthest corner of the Smyths street; thence by an angle of 323 deg. a Northwest, eight deg., Northerly foure hundred thirty-one foot, to ye farthest corner of ye Graft; thence 319 deg., or Northwest foure deg., Northerly one hundred fifty-one foot to ye farthest corner of Stoutenberg's garden, which is right opposite to the South-east corner of ye New street, the saide street being laid out thirty-six foot in breadth. Performed this 16th day of December, 1685.

"LEO BECKWITH, Dept. Surveior."

The "Butcher's Pen" spoken of was at Wall and Pearl streets; Smyths street is William street, Graft is Broad street, and Stoutenberg's Garden was between Nassau street and Broadway.

In 1756 the first stage line to Philadelphia was established and three days were consumed in the journey. At one time the mail was carried by a boy in his saddle-bags. The postage on newspapers was 9d. a year for fifty miles and 1s. 6d. for 100 miles. Each letter by the "Bristol Packet Boats" to England paid four pennyweights of silver.

The following appeared in 1776:

"This is to give notice to the Public, that the Stage-Waggon, kept by John Barrowhill in Elm Street, in Philadelphia, and John Mersereau of the New Blazing Star, near New York, intend to perform the journey from Philadelphia to New York, in two days, also—to continue seven months, viz—From the 14th of April to the 14th of Nov., and the remaining five months of the year, in New York—

The Waggon to be kept in good order, and good Horses, with sober Drivers. They propose to set off from Philadelphia and Powlas-Hook, on Mondays and Thursdays, punctually at sunrise, and to be at Prince-Town, the same nights and change passengers and return to New York and Philadelphia the same days; the passengers are desired to cross Powlas-Hook Ferry the evening before: the Waggon not to stay after Sunrise. Price each passenger from Powlas-Hook to Prince-Town, Ten Shillings, from there to Philadelphia, Ten Shillings also: Ferriage free; Three Pence each mile any distance between. Any Gentlemen or Ladies that wants to go to Philadelphia, can go in the stage and be at home in five days, and betwo Nights and one Day in Philadelphia, to do business or see the Market Day. All Gentlemen and Ladies who are pleased to favor us with their custom, may depend on due Attendance and Civil Usage, by those Humble Servants.

“JOHN MERSEREAT.

“JOHN BARROWHILL.

“June 25, 1776.”

All officers took the oath of allegiance as a “test act” by swearing “to maintain the reformed religion in conformity to the word of God and the decree of the Synod of Dordretch.” In 1657 sundry Quakers, “for publicly declaring in the streets,” were committed to the dungeon. Robert Hodgson was led at a cart-tail, with his arms pinioned, then beaten with a pitched rope until he fell. Afterward he was set to work with a wheelbarrow at hard labor. The compassion of a sister of Governor Stuyvesant, who was always a very stern man in regard to all offenders, finally procured the liberation of Hodgson. An ordinance provided that any person receiving any Quaker into a house, though

only for one night, should forfeit £50. In 1685 the Jews petitioned to be allowed the public exercise of their religion, but were refused on the ground that "none are allowed by act of Assembly so to worship but such as profess a faith in Christ." The Roman Catholics were also proscribed. A writer says, "A man did not dare to avow himself a Catholic, it was odious, a chapel then would have been pulled down." At election time "No Bishop" could be seen in capitals on the fences.

It was provided that a city surveyor "should regulate the manner of each building on each street so that uniformity may be preserved."

In 1832 there were but four or five houses remaining of the ancient Dutch construction, with gable ends to the street. In 1827 a house of this kind in a fine state of preservation was taken down at the corner of Pearl street and Old Slip marked 1698. Another torn down in Coenties Slip was marked 1701. On the opposite corner was another with the date of 1689. No. 41 Broad street was a house marked 1698, and another equally old stood at the northeast corner of Broad and Beaver streets. In 1699 the old City Hall, at the head of Coenties Slip, which was an ancient and weakened building, was sold to John Rodman for £920, reserving only "the bell, the king's arms and iron works (fettters) belonging to the prison," and granting leave also to allow the cage, pillory and stocks before the same to be removed within one year, and the prisoners in said jail within the said City Hall to remain one month.

Pine street was called King street, Pearl street was Queen street, Cedar street was Little Queen street, Liberty street was Crown street, a part of Beaver street was Princess street, Stone street east of Broad was Duke street, Pearl street near

Broad was Dock street, John street east of William was Golden Hill. Old Windmill lane, where there was a windmill, was between Cortlandt and Liberty streets.

About ten years before the Revolution street lamps came into use, but sometimes there was only one lamp in a street. There was one at the corner of Wall and William streets. Carts were not allowed to have any tires on their wheels. All the carmen to the number of twenty were ordered to be enrolled and to draw an ordinary load for 6d. and to remove weekly from the city the dirt of the streets at 3d. a load. In 1683 12d. a ton was paid by each vessel for the use of the city dock and bridge.

There was no daily paper until after the Revolution. William Bradford published the first paper, a weekly, November 8, 1725, called the *New York Gazette*. Other editors during the war were Rivington, Gaine and Holt. Rivington published the *Royal Gazette*, and was "King's Printer." The following advertisement appeared:

"PRICE ONE SHILLING.—The 'Battle of Brooklyn,' a farce in two acts as it was performed on Long Island, on Tuesday, the 27th of August, 1776, by the representatives of AMERICA, assembled in America."

Pirates prowled along the American coasts and New York had a considerable and profitable trade with them. Governor Fletcher, who ruled from 1692 to 1698, received large gifts from them. The Earl of Bellamont, his successor, was sent out to suppress them and hung some.

Kidd's treasures are much talked of to this day. Captain William Kidd, a Scotchman, was fitted out by a private London company in the "Adventure

Galley " to go to the East Indies in search of pirates and had a commission to take any stray French ship. He turned pirate himself. He was arrested in Boston and sent to England, where he was tried for piracy and the murder of one of his crew. On the latter charge he was convicted and hung at Execution Dock, May 24, 1701.

He frequented Sachem's Head, the Thimble Islands and most of the coast and Bays of Long Island Sound. He landed on Gardiner's Island, off Long Island, where he committed certain treasure to the keeping of Mr. Gardiner, who finally surrendered it to Lord Bellamont.

The receipt given for it is as follows:

"A true account of all such gold, jewels and merchandise, late in the possession of Captain William Kidd, which had been seized and secured by us pursuant to an order from his excellency, Richard, Earl of Bellamont, bearing date July 7, 1699.

"Received the 17th instant of Mr. John Gardiner, viz.:

"No. 1. One bag of dust gold, 63 $\frac{3}{4}$ ounces. 2. One bag of coined gold, 11, and one in silver, 124. 3. One bag of dust gold, 24 $\frac{3}{4}$. 4. One bag of silver rings and sundry precious stones, 4 $\frac{7}{8}$. 5. One bag of unpolished stones, 12 $\frac{1}{8}$. 6. One piece of crystal cornelian, rings, two amethysts. 7. One bag of silver buttons and lamps. 8. One bag of broken silver, 173 $\frac{1}{2}$. 9. One bag of golden bars, 353 $\frac{1}{4}$. 10. One bag of golden bars, 258 $\frac{1}{2}$. 11. One bag of gold dust, 69 $\frac{1}{2}$. 12. One bag of silver bars, 309.

"SAMUEL SEWALL.

"NATHANIEL BYFIEED.

"JEREMIAH DUMMER.

"ANDREW BELCHER.

} Commissioners."

In reviewing the past of this city and port of

New York, now with mighty ocean steamers and swift steamboats crowding its wharves, nothing to my mind is more impressive than the story related by Robert Fulton himself, of the first trip of his steamboat—*Clermont*—to Albany, August 11, 1807, which took thirty-two hours.

"The moment arrived," he related, with much impressiveness, "in which the word was to be given for the vessel to move. My friends were in groups on the deck. There was anxiety mixed with fear among them. They were silent, sad and weary. I read in their looks nothing but disaster, and almost repented of my efforts. The signal was given and the boat moved on a short distance and then stopped and became immovable. To the silence of the preceding moment now succeeded murmurs of discontent, and agitations and whispers and shrugs. I could hear distinctly repeated, 'I told you it was so; it is a foolish scheme; I wish we were well out of it.' I elevated myself upon a platform and addressed the assembly. I stated that I knew not what was the matter, but if they would be quiet and indulge me for half an hour, I would either go on or abandon the voyage for that time. This short respite was conceded without objection. I went below and examined the machinery and discovered that the cause was a slight maladjustment of some of the work. In a short time it was obviated. The boat was again put in motion. She continued to move on. All were still incredulous. None seemed willing to trust the evidence of their own senses. We left the fair city of New York; we passed through the romantic and ever-varying scenery of the Highlands; we descried the clustering houses of Albany; we reached its shores; and then, even then, when all seemed achieved, I was the victim of disappoint-

ment. Imagination superseded the influence of fact. It was then doubted if it could be done again, or, if done, it was doubted if it could be made of any great value."

The Antiquary.

TRIALS OF THE POET.

THE poet wrote of "Christmas cheer,"
And rhymed it well with "glad New Year,"
Then followed with the usual steer:
"O happy day! O day so dear!
Without a sigh, without a tear!
In ecstasy I seem to hear
The bells throughout the hemisphere!
To-day the pauper and the peer,
The humble-minded and the seer,
All join in wishes sweet, sincere—
All clouds of sorrow disappear,
They umph—" He hesitated here
To get a rhyme, and tried "besmear,"
And "sneer," and "jeer," and "persevere,"
"But none," he said, "will do, I fear."
He gave it up, and with a leer
Went out and gorged free lunch and beer!

The Rhymester.

CONTRADICTORY.

JACK—You should have seen Miss Waldo, her eyes flashed fire, and——

ARTHUR—That's funny. You said a moment ago that she froze you with a glance.

The Stickler.

THE BALLAD OF THE BALL.

A LONG WAY AFTER MACAULAY.

GADLEY-GARTIN, of Manhattan,
Swore by the nine gods all,
That a mighty barrel of boodle
He would blow in on a ball.
By the nine gods he swore it
And named the festive day,
And bade his messengers fare forth,
East and west, and south and north,
To summon his array.

East and west, and south and north,
The A. D. T.'s take flight,
And every toff that's in the swim
Hath gotten an invite.
Now beshrew the envious mortal
Who sulketh in his hall,
And cheweth rags, and maketh moan,
Yet saith he careth not a bone
To go to Gartin's ball.

The common truck the summons
Hath heard with bated breath
('Tis a matter of more moment
Than income tax or death),
And every daughter skurryeth,
Likewise each mother's son,
And great the gab of gauds and gems
Until the deed is done.

Forth from the mighty mansions,
Forth from the halls of the hill,
Sweepeth the proud procession,
In garments fit to kill.
"Room for the rowdy-dowdies !
Ho ! Coppers, clear the path ;
Know ye that Gadley-Gartin
Cutteth to-night a swath."

Then up spake an uninvited,
Of rank outsiders three,
Who erstwhile held high honors
In the Four Hundredry.
"Ho ! ye whom Gadley-Gartin
Hath given it in the neck,
The very fate of our future
Demands we appear on deck."

Eftsoon before Gadley-Gartin,
Within his granite gate,
Foregathered the down-turned trio,
Waiting to hear their fate.
A frozen fist he gave them,
And full frigid were his words :
"Ye were guests at the Silly dinner ;
Go flock with other birds !"

When Gotham the Great is Greater,
And the season of balls cometh in,
And the halls of the hill re-echo
To music's melodious din,
In the pauses 'twixt punches and pavaues,
Still many the tale will recall
Of the throwing down of the trio
At the Gadley-Gartin ball !

The Balladist.

SENTENCED FOR LIFE.

BY OPIE READ.

I WAS, they said, as a failure the most nearly perfect specimen that had ever strode upon the turnpike. That was the vulgar way in which they put it. By *they* I mean the inhabitants of a village in Tennessee. I had been admitted to the bar and had stood up in the presence of the judge and a batch of jurors in defence of a man charged with having stolen a hog. The hour that I had prayed for so longingly had come at last. I was at the threshold of fame's temple. Through the portals I could see the blue light burning upon the altar. And I quoted poetry to that jury, and mind you, my client was charged with hog-stealing. A fool red-faced lawyer, a man I had always despised, a sandy-haired guerilla, a grinning machine—that fellow snorted and then everybody had to laugh. The opposition lawyer arose, for my speech had been cut short and I had dropped with no life in my legs. He got up with a smile and began to talk, not of his side of the case, but of the poetry that I had quoted. He said that he did not see the relevancy. He believed that nothing was stronger or more effective than appropriate verse, but he could not understand the strange perversity of a mind that would go to a flower-song to seek a defence for a man accused of gathering swine. To his mind there was but one applicable product in all the field of poesy—an old melody known as “Tom, Tom, the piper’s son, stole a pig” and so on. Now the entire court-room was in an

uproar and I was laughed, not only out of the house, but from the bar. I had spent all my money in preparing myself for this heart-breaking failure, and the question which confronted the three crows that sat on a limb—what shall we do for food to eat?—now confronted me. I don't know to what desperate end I might have been driven had not a shaft of sunshine shot through the mist. The United States Marshal for Tennessee sent me the offer of a position as clerk in his office in Nashville. He had known my father, had heard that I was rather a bright young fellow and evidently had not heard of my failure. And now, instead of being the laughing-stock, I was the envy of the village. Almost the entire population followed me to the railway station, the judge, the machine-grinning lawyer, and even the cool-blooded wretch who had accused me of going to a flower-song to find defence for a man who had stolen a hog. But the pride and gladness born of my good fortune took the bitterness out of my heart.

It was the marshal's ambition to have it said that he had cleared his district of all illicit distillers. Upon his appointment to office the eastern part of the State had been infested with "wild-cat" stills. Whisky, sometimes in coffins lined with tin, came down the small rivers emptying into the Cumberland. It was sold within sight of the government building. A clerk in the revenue office had been found drunk on it. This was a shame upon American civilization. The marshal sent deputies into the mountains. Some of them came back. Others didn't return. But after two years of hard and dangerous work the chief deputy reported that all but one of the numerous wild liquor mills had been destroyed. This was good news and the marshal gave

a dinner. Six months later it was discovered that the one wild mill was still running. A large force of men were sworn in and sent to the mountains. They arrested upon suspicion every able-bodied man in a whole county; they explored every cave, kindled a fire in every hollow tree, turned over logs—did everything—but wild-cat whisky continued to trickle from that neighborhood down into the city where the marshal represented a great government. The deputies were brought home and shrewd detectives from Chicago were sent to the mountains. And now the people were so thoroughly aroused that many of them, who at first had, of course, maintained a sullen silence came out openly and swore that the moonshiners must be captured to save the reputation of the community. But the detectives came back and swore that the distillery, if one really existed there, was safe from the scrutiny of any human eye. I took my place in the office about two weeks before the detectives gave up the search, and I was in the marshal's room when the chief detective came in to resign his commission.

"And you mean to tell me," said the marshal, "that you can't find as big a thing as a still-house must of necessity be? I understand that you found a diamond that had been hidden in a pile of straw. And yet you can't find a distillery."

"I can't find it, sir," said the detective. "It is neither on the ground, under the rocks nor in the trees. I don't believe there is one up there."

"Look here!" the marshal cried, and from his desk he took a vial of white whisky. "This was brought to the city night before last."

"But how do you know it was brought from the Green Rock neighborhood?"

"An expert tells me that it was made of Green

Creek water," the marshal replied. "He knows it. I have tried to deceive him and can't. The water has just a little mineral property in it, and gives the whisky a certain flavor, so he says. And I believe him. You may put this vial among a hundred others containing illicit whisky and he can pick it out. So don't tell me that this did not come from the Green Creek community."

After the detective went out the marshal and I sat, continuing to talk over what he regarded as his disgrace. "It isn't exactly a disgrace," said he, "but it is a stumbling-block in my pathway. Look here," he suddenly spoke up, giving me a sharp look, "you have evinced a tact for keen penetration. Why can't you go up there and find that distillery?"

This was in the nature of a start to me: not that I feared the danger of the undertaking, but that the marshal should have discovered so worthy a trait in me. I was afraid on the instant to trust my voice, so I gave him a smile of great confidence. And it stimulated him. "I believe you could go up there and do something. Let me see. If you could go as some sort of professional man and live in the community—take part in their affairs, local politics, church work, everything—I am sure you could after a while discover the secret of that still. The people have pretended to help us, but it was all a bluff. What do you think of the idea?"

"I could go as a lawyer," I answered, and I must have blushed, for the memory of that wretch telling me that I ought to have quoted "Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son," rushed over me. "I have studied law, and I believe I could make a pretty fair stagger toward practising it."

"Good!" he cried. "Just the very thing. And

they can't tell whether you're much of a lawyer or not. All you've got to do is to keep on talking. The chances are that you'll not get a case. Would you be willing to go up there and stay three months? Out of the world, but a man always learns a great deal by getting out of the world and looking back at it. Is it a go?"

"It is," I replied without hesitation. "I am here to serve you, and whatever you may set me to doing I shall do it to the best"——

"Good," he said, chopping in two what I intended to be a fetching sentence. "How soon can you get ready?"

I looked at my watch. This pleased him, and in his smile I thought I discovered a raise of salary. "It is now 3 o'clock. The train leaves in ten minutes. It is five minutes' walk from here to the station. But I can take a cab. I will be ready in five minutes."

He had put me in a position to "work" him. I had been perfectly honest until he tempted me by placing a premium on shrewdness and a matter-of-fact mind. And after I had permitted him to deceive himself, a revelation of my real, poetry-loving self would not only have been a harshness to him but a cruelty to myself. The time was short, but I was ready for the train. I had to pack my bag and collect a law library, brought haphazard by a porter and tumbled into another bag. I did unnecessary things to show how quickly they could be done and then I was off, congratulating myself upon what might be a most amusing adventure and pitying the marshal for being a crank. He entered the car with me.

"You will change your name, of course," said he, standing ready to hasten from the coach.

"No, I think not. I don't believe it would be a good idea. Somebody might come along, call me Ellis, and spoil it all."

"That's true, but suppose they should find that you had been connected with the marshal's office?"

"They would not be likely to find that out, but if they should I could tell them that I had been connected with the Government in the capacity of an attorney. That would give me standing in the community."

"You are all right. Sometimes we can hide the most in the smallest disguise. That's the idea adopted by some of the celebrated French detectives. Yes, sir, you can go up there as John Ellis and be all right. Well, take care of yourself."

I overhauled my law library as I was whirled along, and I could have wished it a trifle more extensive. But it was enough for a beginning—a beginning that could not be worse than my former attempt. I had been provided with money enough to live regardless of clients, a most happy safeguard, and as I leaned back listening to the rumbling of the train and looking at the darkness gathering among the great rocks of the foot-hills, I accounted myself a most fortunate young fellow. Suddenly it occurred to me that I must surely come home out of favor and fallen in degree; that after making a failure I could not hold the marshal's good opinion. This worried me. Perhaps my pretended sharpness might cost me my place. But this was now a useless speculation. And besides, luck might favor me. I could at least spend a season of delicious dreaming. I had narrowly missed being a rhymester. I had mused in blank verse, spent weeks in a metrical intoxication, and now I could indulge myself in an epic spree. So after all I had nothing to regret.

I lay down, and when I awoke at morning I was charmed with the beauty of the view. We were in the mountains. A distant crag lighted by the rising sun was to me a golden temple, and the mist, lifting slowly from about it, pearl and purple, was the prayer-laden incense of the worshippers. Far below a vapor was curled into the recumbent form of a mighty giant, wounded and struggling, and suddenly a small creek, set afire by the bursting sun, looked a stream of blood pouring from his side. I could scarce restrain a cry of exultation. It seemed that not until this moment had I completely lived, and with the rugged old Carlyle I could have belowed, "A great drama played upon the theatre of infinitude, with the suns for lamps and with eternity as a background." Into a sudden darkness I was shot, impenetrable darkness with the sun's dazzle—an echo of fire—dancing in my eyes. Out again into the blaze we sped, writhing, roaring, snorting, the black smoke falling low and like a monster crawling down the gorge. And before I had recovered from these sensations I was put down at a village called Green Rock.

The proprietor of the hotel received me rather suspiciously. I asked for the register and he strove to hide his tittering, "Register?" he said. "I reckon you've got into the wrong house. You must be lookin' for the county clerk's office. About how fur from here is the land you want to register? You'd better be a leetle keerful and find out fust whuther or no somebody else hain't tuck it up. Thar's mighty little State land layin' round here, I tell you. Feller come here some time ago an' 'lowed he'd put his claim on a piece of land, an' he was told to go keerful, but he didn't, an' putty soon he couldn't go at all."

I assured him that I didn't want to register land, that I wanted to stay at his hostelry, and supposed that I had to put my name in a book kept for that purpose. He tittered again. "Why, do you reckon I'm goin' to furnish books fer folks to write in? I ain't no writin' master. If you want to stop with me, all right. Drap yo' things over thar in the corner an' go in an' wife'll stir you up a bite to eat."

Upon coming out from breakfast I found the leading citizens of the town assembled in the sitting-room. The news of my arrival had been spread about the place, and in coming to inquire about me and to look into my affairs they had but followed a custom as old as the community. They were not ill-looking. Clad in raiment woven upon the home loom, they were rather quaint and picturesque. They were not impertinent except as all inquisitiveness is an impertinence. It was evident that there was nothing vicious about them and that they were acting from a sense of duty. The man who addressed me was rather intelligent, a school teacher I learned afterward.

"I hope you'll excuse us," said he, "but we were told of your arrival, and as we are all anxious with regard to the welfare of our community, so far out of the world, we have come to ask your name and to gather any other information about yourself that you may deem it fit to give us."

This was delivered in so kindly a tone that my countenance must have shown the effect it had on me, for I remember that before I had time to reply they nodded to one another and smiled in great good humor. "Gentlemen," said I, "all there is about me worth knowing shall be freely given to you. I have heard much of the delight of your climate and the magnificence of your scenery,

both of which I have this morning seen verified, and having just been graduated from a school of law, I decided to visit this place and perhaps resolve to cast my lot with you. My name is John Ellis."

An old man looked hard at me and asked: "Any kin to Hiram Ellis that used to live away over yander in Sumner county?"

"A son," I answered.

"Don't mean to tell me that Hiram was your daddy?"

"Yes, sir."

"What sort of a lookin' man was he about twenty-five year ago?"

"Well, as nearly as I can recall he had at that time a very thick head of black hair, dark whiskers, brown eyes and a small mole over his right eye. He walked with a slight limp in consequence of a bullet received in battle, and——"

"Boys," the old man broke in, "that was Hiram Ellis, and now that I take a leetle closer look at this gentleman, I'm ready to swear he tells the truth. Let's give him the hand of fellowship."

And they did, gathering about me and shaking hands with all the solemnity of a most important ceremony.

Before noon-time I had rented my office and arranged my library. There were six or eight lawyers in the town, and looking upon me not as a business rival, but as an aid to their cause (being, as I soon found, a distinct class arrayed against the farmer and the mechanic), they called upon me in a body and assured me that I had undoubtedly come to a place where ability was appreciated. This was encouraging, and I wondered how poetry would go with a jury gathered from among these mountain homes.

Several days passed and I was still attracted by the rugged beauty of my surroundings. Far behind the village there was a tract of almost level country through which there flowed a river as clear as a strip of light. This was Green Creek, and from its water came the whisky that could not be found except at market under the eye of the marshal. I walked many miles up and down the stream, and, like the detective, I was willing to swear that there was no distillery near its romantic shores. One day I stopped at a large, neat log house about a mile distant from the town. As I stepped upon the broad veranda a young woman came out with a broom in her hand. I expected to give her a fright, so modest were those mountain maidens, but not in the least was she startled. She bowed, smiled, and asked me to take a chair. I sat down, and after exchanging a few words with her, became bolder in my investigation. She was tall and graceful. Her eyes were blue, her mouth sweetly humorous and her magnificent plentitude of hair was almost red. I was the one to receive the shock of astonishment. She was the humanized product of a mountain sunrise. She stepped forward to make a threat with her broom at a dog that showed me his teeth, and the grace of her movement gave my heart the fluttery feeling we get in a swing when rushing through the air. I laughed, not with mirth, but with a boiling over of spirits.

"You are the new lawyer, I believe," she said.

"Yes, the new lawyer without new clients."

"Oh, they will come," she laughed. "Our people can't keep out of disputes."

"Have you lived here long?" I asked.

"All my life, with the exception of the time I spent at school in Nashville,"

"Oh, you have been away. I thought you had received a training different——"

"I will give you my case when I go to law," she broke in, laughing.

"Pardon me, I meant no flattery."

A very pleasant-looking old lady came up the steps. I was introduced, not by name, but as the new lawyer. I bowed and mumbled something, not knowing what to call her, for I had not heard her name. She sat down in a rocking-chair and began to tell me of a fox that had carried off a goose. I told her that my earliest grief was given date by a fox that had robbed me of a gander to which I was deeply attached. The old lady gave me a sympathetic look, but the girl shook her sunset of hair and laughed. "Meize," said the mother in kind reproof, "don't laugh at the gentleman's misfortune."

Meize! And I looked at her again, now that I knew her name. A few moments ago the word would have meant nothing, but now it was trembling with rich significance. As we talked a cloud came down the satin-ribbon river and rain began to pour upon the trees in the yard, and the roses ducked their heads laughing; the crape myrtle shivered and the dahlias danced in a witch-like glee; and we talked, the girl and I, of foolish things. But now and then the old lady would give me a piece of information. She had been brought up in a gentler community and she never would have consented to live away off there, but her husband wanted to live where he could hunt deer. And when he died she was too poor to go back to Virginia. She asked me how I liked hotel life. Old man Gates, who kept the tavern, was a good man, it was true, but she had heard some complaint about

the biscuit on his table; and she didn't believe that his fried chicken was of the best. She felt sorry for one who had to board. A thought struck me and made me dizzy.

"Madam," said I, "the hotel is all right as hotels go, but I detest them all. And I am now looking for a place to board in this neighborhood. Would you mind taking me?"

"It's just as Meize says. I let her have pretty much her own way. We wouldn't do it for the board money so much as for company. We do get mighty lonesome."

I must have stood on tip-toe before Meize gave me her deciding vote. But she delighted me with a smile and said that I might come if I was not hard to please. Hard to please, indeed! I would cheerfully have agreed to eat oak leaves and sleep on a pine board.

I hastened to town and soon returned with my luggage. The evening flew away on the wings of an echoing laugh, and I was shown to my room, rag-carpeted, plaster-of-Paris ornaments on the mantelpiece and a bed that looked like a snowdrift. Upon that feathery pile I stretched myself, and a truth that I had forgotten to muse upon came to me: I had secured a client and he was not charged with stealing a hog, but had shot a man, a much higher and much more respectable order of crime. Yes, I had made great progress toward the discovery of the moonshine still—a case in court and in love with a beautiful woman.

CHAPTER II.

My client appeared to be a good sort of impulsive fellow, and now that I had taken his case I was resolved to bend an endeavor in his behalf. Meize and her mother declared that they were going to the courthouse on the day of trial, and they did. It was an embarrassment to see the girl sitting there waiting for me to talk; I grew nervous and was afraid that I should fail. I had mapped out a speech, but how the lines were blurred. My time came and I arose. My first consciousness was that I had ceased to tremble and was strong. The girl was an inspiration. Poetry rushed upon me and I did not restrain it. I saw the jurymen lean toward me; I saw their eyes grow brighter. Ah, sentiment was never out of harmony with these half-wild surroundings. In a community where schools and a uniform system of training had reduced nearly all men to a level, or rather where all men had been lifted to a uniform plane, a bright fancy might be looked upon as an unhealthy luxury of the mind; but among these mountaineers a wild thought galloping like a runaway horse with streaming mane was a joy, a delight akin to the thrill of a deer chase. I forgot the marshal's office and the whisky that came from Green Creek. I felt unindividualized, a part of the universe, an instrument played upon by a wonderful force. When I sat down people rushed forward to shake hands with me; and amid the buzz I heard the jury acquit my man.

I walked home with Meize. "I thought I was going to have some fun with you," she said. "I

thought that I should find something to laugh at, but I didn't. I forgot that you were making a speech. I thought you were blowing a flute."

Two months flew past like a bird in the sunlight. My speech had made me famous, and it appeared that the whole community arose in litigation and all for my benefit. My plaything had become a useful tool. I did not need the remittances sent from the marshal's office, so I put the money aside. I was told by an old man that if I took care of myself I could go to Congress. None save an orator could fitly represent those poetic people. To them a quiet strength could never be a greatness. The statesman was the man who could stand up and talk.

Meize was the manager of her mother's farm. The work was done by a gaunt, lank-haired young fellow whom they called Ab. He was a quaint character, ignorant as to books, but as shrewd as a fox. One day, coming home early, I went out where he was ploughing and walked around the field with him. He laughed when he saw me coming.

"Ab, don't you want to go fishing some evening?" I asked.

He grinned. "Don't believe you could tell if you got a bite," said he.

"Why so?"

"Oh, feller gits that way some time. I was that way once. Didn't know I had a bite till a snake bit me. Reckon the same snake has bit you. Putty snake. They call it love." Here he threw back his head and whooped. "Yes, sir," he went on, looking at me out of the corner of his sharp eye, "I reckon that snake has got about the sharpest teeth of anything that walks, crawls or flies. An' the wust of it is that a feller never knows when he's

goin' to git bit. Always hits him up here in the breast. Gee, there. That hoss fastens his eye on the sun an' if it don't go down as fast as he thinks it ought to he begins to hang back. Yes, sir, snake bit me about three year ago last spring. The fust thing I know'd the water was a-runnin' outen my eyes. An' then I struck a trot fer the doctor's. Doctor was a gal. I gave her my symptoms, as the feller says, an' axed her if she could cure me an' she 'lowed not. This almost tuck my breath. She had let on like if I did get bit she could cure me, but after I was dun bit she 'lowed she couldn't. So I want to tell you that you'd better look out. Good many fellers have been bit an' have axed the young lady at the house if she could cure them an' she allus 'lowed not." He looked at me full in the face and I saw that he was not trying to have fun with me, but was in his odd way seeking to give me a kindly warning.

"Ab, I am snake-bit," said I. "And the snake is long enough to coil around the universe, and thrust his tongue into the sun."

"Whoa! For the Law's sake!" he cried, bringing his horses to a standstill. "That's the worst bite I ever hearn of. But it's all right. When you air bit be bit by a big 'un. I'm sorry fer you, though, Cap'n. Wisht I had a-spoke to you sooner. That woman jest nachully kain't hep makin' folks love her. The fust time I ever seed her I waited to 'till the moon got full an' then went out an' danced all night. Git ep, boys. Jest couldn't hep it. Walk around with me once more an' then we'll take out. It ain't often I pick up as good company as you air. Git ep, boys. Yes, sir, danced under the full moon till the moon was empty. Oh, I knowed she couldn't love me; it would a-skeered me mighty nigh to death

if she had. Believe I'd a-struck a trot an' never stopped. Tuck me a long time to git over it. Soaked myse'f in the creek putty nigh all summer. Soakin' is powerful good fur sich a ailment. Yes, sir, an' when I did git over it I come over here, to work an' have been all right ever since."

"Did she ever love any one?" I asked, almost choking.

"No, sub, not that I could diskiver. 'Peers that her schoolin' keeps her from it. An' seein' how much control she's got over herself makes me almost wisht I had went to school myse'f. But I reckon after all life's too short to fling away on books. It's jest acceptin' what some other fellow 'lows he knows. Why, one of the best edycated men we ever had round here couldn't skin a squirrel. Didn't even know how to put a minner on a hook, an' a ordinary chunk of a boy could fling him down. But land sakes how he could talk about folks that lived 'way back yander when thar wan't no guns an' nuthin' to kill fellers with but bows an' swords. But it ain't that way with you. You've got hoss sense along with yo' larnin'."

I said nothing until we had come to the place where he was to unhitch the horses from the plough. "Ab, I am indebted to you for your kindly warning. I had about made up my mind to ask her to be my wife."

"Well, but don't let what I said hold you off. You never kin tell about a woman, you know. Feller that lived up the creek tried to steal water-millions outen a young widder woman's patch, an' she peppered his back with about half a pound of fine shot. He went away in a hurry an' about two hours he came back. 'Look here,' said he, 'mam an' pap is gone off summers an' thar ain't nobody at

home to pick these here shot out, so I 'lowed that if you ain't busy you mout pick 'em out.' Well, suh, she picked 'em out, an' got so much attached to him endurin' of the operation that she afterwards married him. So you never kin tell which way a cat or a woman's goin' to jump."

After supper the girl and I sat on the veranda. The night was soft and beautiful. We talked of books, of poetry. And I was almost startled to hear her say that she did not care for Tennyson. "His life was too easy, too undisturbed," she said. "Once he arose to sublime and terrific passion and apologized to gentle womanhood. He was too much of a hedge-row, perfectly trimmed. He was too fine a mechanic. The waters of his life were too smooth, too clear. To me a story told in verse is not poetry. It can be beautiful, but it may be too quiet and easy-flowing. I never cared for the verses intended for young ladies. I used to hunt deer with my father and that was real poetry."

Thus talked that mountain girl, sitting there with her head glorified by the light of the moon. But it did not make me love her more; it inspired me with fear. She said that she did not care for Longfellow, that he was too serene. She loved Poe, for he was wild and miserable. Up to that moment I had almost worshipped Poe. Now I hated him. To hear her say that she loved him pierced my heart with an icicle. For a long time we were silent. Suddenly she startled me by saying: "You have so surprised yourself that I suppose you are now almost determined to practice law in earnest."

It was some time before I could frame a reply, and even then it was but a bungling effort. "I admit that I have surprised myself, but I came here to practice law."

"How long?"

"Why, I have settled here."

"And with nothing else in view?"

"Will you please tell me why you ask such a question?"

"You know why I ask it," she replied with a laugh. "And I know why you came. Yes, and I think that I can be of assistance to you."

I got up, looked about, walked to the end of the veranda, came back and sat down. She laughed softly. "You have come to find the last of the still houses and you shall find it. I know where it is."

"Not so loud," I whispered, trembling from head to foot. "Yes, I acknowledge it. That's why I came, but I have been turned aside from my mission. But is it possible that you know where the distillery is?"

"Yes. I will show it to you."

"Because you take such an interest in me?"

"Yes, frankly, because you are the only companion I have ever known."

"But arrests will follow and you may get into trouble," I said, leaning toward her.

"No one will suspect me, and no one shall suspect you."

"When will you show me? It will be a great feather in my cap."

She laughed, I thought a little bitterly. "And could the finding of a distillery add fame to an orator?"

"You make me ashamed of myself when you put it that way. But I must do my duty even if it should kill my fame."

"You are brave, Mr. Ellis," She got up and stood looking at the creek,

"When will you show me?" I asked.

"Within a few days. Let us say a week." She turned to go.

"Wait a moment," I pleaded. I got up and stood near her. "I told you that I had been turned aside. I have. I have turned aside into a heaven of roses and perfume——"

"Good-night," she said.

I did not see her the next morning. I had passed a sleepless night worrying over her, trying to fathom her. I argued that she must be interested in me or she would not offer to reveal to me the "wild-cat's" hiding place. Was it that she wanted me to finish my work and go away? I was troubled during the day and went home early in the afternoon. I passed the house, peeping about to catch a glimpse of her, and sought the hired man in the field, but he was gone to the mill, a boy told me. I went to the house and talked to the girl's mother, waiting for her, but she did not come until supper-time. At night we sat upon the veranda and talked about the poets. Once I spoke of the distillery. "Oh, are you so very ambitious to shine as a detective?" she asked, and I felt my heart bleeding with the wound she gave me.

"Let us forget about the still," I said. "I wish you had not told me of it. I was just on the eve of writing to the marshal to tell him that the thing could not be found."

"But I tell you it shall be found," she said.

I tried to take her hand, but she put it back from me. "Meize," I whispered, "won't you let me tell you something?"

"No; not until I have kept my promise with you. And now I must ask you to——"

"To do what?"

"To keep your distance," she said, and with that she left me.

My office was filled with clients, but I was miserable. I could not understand the position into which I had been thrust. Why should she demand a week's time? Why had she spoken of it at all? I won another case, one of great importance to the community, and Meize was in the courtroom. I thought that I saw her eyes brighten under the fervor of my speech, and I know she was pleased, for as we were walking home together she said: "Mr. Ellis, there is true poetry in your orations. To-day you took me back to a time when father and I saw the hounds flying after a deer. I was going to say that this place is too small and obscure for you, but I believe that genius thrives best where the land is wild." In her eyes there was the same sweet frankness I had noticed there before. And I could not reply to her, so strong was my emotion. With easy grace she helped me out of my embarrassment; she talked of other things, the glowering cliff above, the creek far below, an old log fort wherein white men had assembled to fight the Indians. Before we reached home and several times that evening I strove to tell her of the passion that was smothering my heart, but she always found a means of escape. So at last I resolved to wait until the week was up to see what mystery was lying in ambush for me.

In the house there was no piano, but there was a banjo, and upon it the girl could pick most wonderful airs—witch dances and hounds straining themselves to catch a deer. Sunday came and we went to church, far up the creek, and we heard an old man cry out that everyone who refused to kneel would be buried in a lake of fire. Meize and I knelt

down to avoid the prominence that a refusal would have given us, and after the services were over the preacher came to us and congratulated me upon having taken a step toward the redemption of my soul. All this time my mind was on the mystery lying in wait for me, and as we were coming home I gazed at every rock and wild place, half expecting that the still would rise up and say, "Here I am."

Monday was long, for Tuesday was the time set for the revelation. Monday night I went early to bed, like a boy who would hasten the coming of a holiday, but I was filled with such a longing that I could not sleep. It was not that I really wanted to find the still; it was that I believed a certain freedom of speech would follow. Morning came. At breakfast the girl was charming, with roses in her marvellous hair. "What time are you coming from the office to-day?" she asked with mischief in her eyes.

"This is a holiday and I am not going to work," I answered.

"A holiday? I thought you had forgotten."

"No, I might forget to breathe, but I could not forget that."

The old lady looked at me. "You are talking riddles," she said. "I don't see how a body could forget to breathe." She had mischief in her eyes, too, for she winked at the girl.

After breakfast I was delighted to see the old lady take down her reticule. She was going over to a neighbor's, to be gone all day, she said. So now there was nothing in the way. I looked at the girl and she smiled. But when her mother was gone she said nothing about the still. Was it so near that we did not have to start early? Was it

in the neighborhood of the town, and if so why had not the detectives found it?

"Are you ready?" she asked.

"Yes. When shall we start? Shall I get the horses?"

"No, we can walk. Come this way."

I followed her into the house, into the kitchen, into a small pantry; and here she lifted a trap-door, and without saying a word descended what appeared to be a ladder. "Come on," she called, "there is a light down here." I followed her in silence, my astonishment being great. Down into a cellar I went, keeping close to her. "There it is," she said, pointing. I looked and saw a number of copper kettles and a small furnace. "Meize," I cried, "what does this mean?"

"It means that I am the wild-cat distiller," she said.

"No, it is impossible!" I exclaimed.

"It won't appear so when I have told you all about it." She was silent for a moment, looking at me; and then she went on: "During the war my father was a Union man, but a foraging party of Federals came this way and took his entire crop, amounting to a thousand dollars. They gave him vouchers, but he could never collect the money. Year after year he strove to secure it. Congressman after Congressman worked in his behalf, but there was always some sort of drawback. And he died seven years ago, never having been able to get the money. Then mother tried, but with no better luck. Living not far from here was a rebel sympathizer who was stripped of his corn at the same time. But he got his pay; how he managed it we could never learn. My mother went to Washington—sold eggs and butter for money enough to go

on—but she could do nothing. It seemed that there was something wrong with the signatures attached to the vouchers. Mother came back disheartened. Well, I grew up. My ambition was to get an education, and I told my mother that if she would mortgage the farm for money enough to send me off to school I would make the Government pay the amount due us with interest. I figured that we ought to receive about three thousand dollars, counting in all the trouble. Mother could not see how I could do anything, but she did as I requested. I had a plan, but I said nothing about it. Well, after returning from school I put my plan into execution. I employed Ab—knowing his shrewdness and fidelity—got together the necessary utensils and began to make whisky, determined to make enough to pay our claim and then stop. The amount was realized two weeks ago, and I am no longer a wild-cat. But that is not all. I wrote to the authorities at Washington, laid the case before them, recounted the trouble we had passed through, and asked them for a pardon, promising not to violate the revenue laws again. I told them that the whisky we made was sold for medicinal purposes—which was a fact—that it was absolutely pure, and in that respect was a blessing rather than a curse. I was informed by a Congressman that the pardon would undoubtedly be granted, that my determination to get even with the Government was regarded as a good joke, and that my papers of freedom would reach me within a week. That was the reason I told you to wait a week. The pardon came day before yesterday.”

I took her hand and she did not try to put me back. “Meize,” I said, “I arrest you and no pardon on earth shall take you from me.”

I kissed her and she put her glorious arms about my neck. Just then a voice came down the ladder. "When a man's snake-bit by a snake that kin wrap all round the world an' then lick the sun, why, he's bit bad. But I have knowed fellers to git cured if they found the right sort of doctor in time. I was bit once an' had to soak in the creek putty nigh all one season."

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That night I wrote as follows to the marshal: "I herewith send my resignation, and return the money you sent me to further your scheme of discovering the illicit distillery. I have not needed the money, as my law practice has been fruitful. You may congratulate yourself that the distillery has been found and that the distiller will be sentenced for life."

PROFESSIONAL REGRET.

"WELL," said the soldier of the new school, "we've got a live wire clear 'round the camp, and now the enemy can't come too soon!"

"Humph," muttered the old-school soldier, "some more of your disgusting assault-and-battery warfare!"

The Correspondent.

HIS FINISH IN SIGHT.

OLD SOAK—Doctor, what's the easiest way for me to stop drinking?

DOCTOR—The easiest way for you? Why, keep on drinking.

The Prohibitionist.

IN GAY NEW YORK.

I.

In all the world there's no such place
As gay New York,
On all sides happiness you trace
In gay New York ;
What tho' the critic carpeth that
One never knows where one is at,
We beat all cities fair and pat,
In gay New York.

II.

There's no such sanitary town
As gay New York ;
They never pull the buildings down
In gay New York.
Such happiness is indeed great,
Our streets are in such perfect state,
They rest for years immaculate
In gay New York.

III.

Newsboys ne'er harass you to death
In gay New York ;
They murmur " baseball " 'neath their breath
In gay New York.
And should there be an " extra " out,
The same they never shriek or shout,
But whisper what it is about,
In gay New York.

IV.

Let hayseed legislation reign
In gay New York ;
To rule ourselves would be insane
In gay New York ;
Let us rejoice and deem it fun,
We can't have whiskey after 1
" Josh " says so, and it must be done
In gay New York.

The Gothamite.

A SCHEME FOR ESTRANGEMENT.

VAN CLOVE—You're drunk nearly all the time now, aren't you ?

OLD SOAK—Yes. My wife's mother told me she never wanted to see me in this condition again.

The Reformer.

THE MAN WHO DID.

MAY—What's the matter dear ?

CLARA—My engagement with Charley is broken.

MAY—But I thought you intended to break it ?

CLARA—So I did, but the wretch went and broke it himself.

The Jilt.

BULLS.

FIRST SPECULATOR—I'll tell you something to buy for a rise.

SECOND DITTO—Well ?

FIRST SPECULATOR—Balloons.

The Tipster

A CHARMER OF MEN.

A STUDY IN THE ETERNAL FEMININE.

CLOTHILDE, what are you trying to do with that stupid fellow?"

Clothilde, who was reclining in the white-and-gold sofa pillows that deluged her couch, slowly raised her arms till the delicate lace of her sleeves fell back to her elbows, and examined her shapely hands critically.

"If I told you," she said, indifferently, "you would not believe me."

"I don't know; I might. With all your faults you are frank."

"Thank you."

"You are, aren't you?"

"I believe so," she smiled. "The fact is, I find it entirely too troublesome to be otherwise." She said this while wrapping the lace of her left sleeve closely over the warm flesh with the tapering fingers of her right hand.

"Who is the fellow?"

"I introduced you."

"But who is he?"

"Nobody."

"He is evidently poor."

"As the proverbial church mouse."

"Then what are you wasting your time on him for?"

"Frankly, because I am sorry for him. I told you you would not believe me."

The man laughed.

"You are right, and yet, with your serious air, one might feel inclined to do so."

"It is true."

There was a pause in the conversation. Arnold Fitch, with his cigarette between his lips and a half-amused expression in his brown eyes, was regarding her quietly. Finally he said, with the indifference she had indulged in—"Clothilde, you are a strange combination. There are times when you appear utterly heartless, and there are others when your heartlessness seems to be an erratic expression of kindness and compassion, which doesn't in the least, by the way, excuse you in my sight for the way you play fast and loose with men and your own morals."

"Morals!" Clothilde sneered. "Are there any? My association with people of your sex has caused me to doubt it."

"You are always severe on the men."

She shrugged her shoulders.

"I am glad I am not in love with you."

"You are," she said, simply.

"I know that you think so, my dear" (he was always telling Clothilde and himself that he did not love her); "but I am not. I used to be. I could not view you so critically, nor could I put up with your vagaries, if I were."

"You have to put up with them," she said, "and if you did not love me you would not be so constantly at my heels, or rather my feet."

"You are very beautiful!" Arnold said, with momentary passion.

"Not especially; I make you think so."

"But about that fellow," Arnold continued, reverting to the former subject, "your long-legged friend who has just left. How did you happen to

run across such an absolutely uninteresting creature?"

"Listen!" she exclaimed, springing to a sitting position and dropping her beautiful hands between her knees. "Listen! I'll tell you all about him. Yes, he is stupid, he is ugly, he is uncouth, his clothes are absurd, he can't talk, he hasn't an accomplishment on earth; but he is good, and I mean to reward him for it. When isn't goodness stupid?"

"When you indulge in it, my dear."

"Nonsense," the woman exclaimed, while her eyes glowed, and a rich color deepened in her cheeks. "I don't indulge in it! What I am going to do with that man everybody in the world, you included, would call wicked; but I shall do it all the same. I'm going to take him straight into a seventh heaven as a reward for all he has done and endured. I have let him into my presence, and now I intend to dress for him, give him my time, let him look at me, grow drunk upon me if he likes, touch me, kiss me—yes, even that. And you must admit that in so doing I sacrifice myself. It's my religion, my kind of religion, you know. I believe God has kept me for him as a crown to compensate him for his bitter life!"

"And when you have got through crowning him, what then?" Arnold sneered.

"I don't know, I haven't thought. I'll probably go away for awhile."

"And he, poor devil, will remain to blow his brains out."

"Absurd!" Clothilde replied. "Men don't blow their brains out."

"They do every day," Arnold answered, rising; "but I will be going before he returns. I don't approve of this religion of yours, Clothilde; it's an ex-

cuse for—may I use the word—deviltry, that's all. At this moment, in sight of your beauty and with the full knowledge of your divine companionship, I tell you frankly I detest you—at any rate the part uppermost in you to-day. I regard you as a drunkard in the very worst sense of the word, for your beverage is the heart's blood." He lit another cigarette and puffed away in disgust. "It's sickening. Let that poor fellow go in peace, unless, as is probable, you have already destroyed it. By the way, why did you send him out for the candy?"

Clothilde laughed merrily.

"Because he was dying to do something for me."

"And when he returns you will laugh at him."

"No, I shall eat some of it, and then, having sweetened my lips, make love to him."

"My God," the man said paling, "and this is the woman I have loved!"

"Whom you *do* love," Clothilde said teasingly, while she looked sensuously in his eyes.

"Not a bit of it!" Arnold replied irritably. "Nor can I understand how you can stoop to such pastime."

"You forget that it is for his sake."

"Bah!"

"I tell you it is!" Clothilde exclaimed excitedly; "whether you believe me or not, I am doing this thing out of pity. That poor man, ugly and ill-favored as you think him, and as he is, has a right to a few hours of pleasure before he dies. He is thirty-four years old, and it has never occurred to him to live a day for himself, or that any happiness is his due. He gets up at 6 o'clock in the morning and sits at his desk till 6 in the evening, and not even one stroke of the pen is for himself. He makes \$75 a month, and on that the family live. He has

the worst room in the flat—a dark hole, in fact. He has the hardest bed, the thinnest pillow, the most wiry blankets. Others sleep while he rises and goes out to work for them. He is a martyr, a slave, a victim of their selfishness, and I'm going to reward him, that's all. You call it wicked, I call it doing what I can for a suffering being."

"Well," Arnold remarked, "I'll say good-bye; there are all kinds of philosophies and religions; yours seems to be, do good that evil may come. I won't see you for some time, not until this is over. Ah! there is the bell. Honestly, Clothilde, I'm tempted to meet that fellow and drag him away from you."

"You couldn't, Arnold."

Arnold laughed harshly.

"The funniest part of the whole business is that you actually believe what you say, while this very instant your eyes shine like those of a tigress about to devour her prey. Control this infamous passion to destroy—send him away."

"And bid *you* remain," she smiled.

Arnold shook himself from the caressing touch she had laid upon his arm, and angrily left her.

In the hall he passed the long-legged man with a brown paper parcel under his arm. He half paused, looked wistfully into the man's eyes, and went his way.

It was a clear bracing afternoon some two months later when Arnold, after a lengthy vacation at the seashore, rang Clothilde's bell, and, receiving a response, entered the hall.

At the foot of the staircase he found his way blocked. Four men were coming down the steps

carrying something which was apparently very heavy. He could not see what it was, for a pale blue blanket, with a border of wild roses, covered the burden and fell down the sides in graceful folds; but he had noticed an ambulance outside, and a sickening feeling crept through him.

"What is it?" he asked, as the men passed.

"A man, sir," one replied. "He shot himself an hour ago."

Arnold ascended the steps.

The first thing that greeted his eye as he entered Clothilde's door was the woman herself, seated, as though she had never left it, upon the couch with the white-and-gold sofa pillows. She wore a tea-gown of some white diaphanous material richly festooned with lace, and at her feet was a pool of blood that the edges were hungrily sucking. Her hands were tightly clasped in her lap, her face was whiter than the gown she wore, and the black semicircles under her eyes were like iron weights pressing upon her cheeks. In her agony she looked her full thirty-seven years, perhaps for the first time in her life; perhaps for the first time also she had forgotten her looks.

"He did it," she said in a hollow voice, raising her haggard eyes to Arnold.

"I told you that he would," Arnold remarked, calmly.

"It was horrible."

"I have no doubt of it."

"Right here before me, before I"—she buried her face in her hands. Presently she looked up.

"And he wasn't stupid after all," she said, dreamily; "he had a great soul."

"Which you," Arnold replied, coldly, "have sent to God. A fit ending to your religion."

A CHARMER OF MEN.

"You are cruel," Clothilde answered without emotion.

"Who would not be in the presence of so cold-blooded a murderess?" the man exclaimed. "Ah! that wickedness should be so divinely cloaked! To look upon you, who could believe you guilty of"—she raised her hands beseechingly, but Arnold went on—"of murder, for that word alone defines your act. People are generally what they seem," he continued vehemently. "A curved back, a restless glance, a halting step will, in nearly every instance, betray a man; but there are some so perfect to look upon that the God who made them might be deceived. Such a creature is a devil, a being opposed to God, and from whom all men should flee as Eve should have flown from the dazzling serpent in Paradise."

Arnold spoke these words tempestuously, while his brow flushed and his eyes flashed. Clothilde arose suddenly and, extending her arms, fell unconscious at his feet. For a while he stood bending over her, regarding her with a kind of fury, resenting the pain of all his fellow men. But the inanimate form, stricken as though by herself, and her pale face, appealed to him. Recognizing his own brutality, he knelt down and roughly drew her to his breast.

Almost instantly she opened her eyes and, flinging her arms about him, broke into hysterical weeping. "Come," Arnold said, a few minutes later, while he kissed her wet face, grown ugly in its pain and pallor; "arouse yourself, Clothilde, and dress. You must get out of this place into the fresh air. You need a glass of wine—a bottle, in fact. I—I—love you, dear, no matter what you are or what you do. After all, it is not your fault if men choose to die for you. I have been away from you two

months; *that* was death! Ah! how I have tried to forget you, to seek consolation and delight in other women, but my infidelities make me hunger for you but the more. Women like you should desire men to be untrue, for then only they know how they love you."

With the blood of her victim wet upon her robe she put her smooth arms about his neck, lifted herself, and kissed him as she had kissed that dead man one week ago, before he knew his doom.

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Two hours later she raised her third glass of wine to her lips and smiled dreamily. She had clothed herself in black, and her pale face beneath the waving ostrich feathers had all the pathetic beauty of a white rose dashed by a storm.

"It is strange how different this makes one feel, isn't it?"

"Very," Arnold replied, filling his own glass.

"Feel my hands—how warm they are."

"And his," Arnold thought, "grow colder." But, looking around and assuring himself that no one was observing, he pressed them to his lips.

Leaning forward, and looking deep in his eyes, Clothilde whispered:

"May I not have done a good deed, after all, Arnold? Think of that poor man having no more work to do, no more sacrifices to make, no more cold mornings to face while the others sleep."

"Comfort yourself so," Arnold replied, at the same time unconsciously releasing her hands. But, later in the evening, standing before her in her own room, he told her that to die for her was nothing, that even a happy man might feel glad to do so; for so men talk in moments of passion.

She was lying upon her couch with the white-and-gold pillows piled high about her, and, in deference to her headache, her unbound wealth of hair fell down by her side and touched the floor.

The red blood was blackening on the carpet, but neither thought of it for the moment nor of the corpse lying in the undertaker's shop, stiff and cold under its covering of black oilcloth, where a fat woman sat knitting peacefully and a canary bird sang as if about to burst its little throat.

The Tragedian.

IN HAPPY ISLAND.

IN Happy Island dreams come true,
And roses bloom eternally ;
No breeze sings there that is not sweet,
No treach'rous tempests toss that sea.

If so you knew the way to fare,
Dear happy island lies not far ;
'Tis just beyond the gates of sleep,
And this side of the Evening Star.

Your arm about your sweetheart's waist,
Your lips aglow with kiss and song,
To Happy Island fare you forth—
The way is neither hard nor long !

But let no worldly thoughts approach,
Nor think of sordid, real things—
Or you will never find what way
Tired folk to Happy Island brings.

I'm off for Happy Island now,
As soon as dreams can take me there ;
My Love shall go, some books, some sweets,
All else I'll leave in care of Care.

So here's good-by to tears and sighs!
 My Happy Island ship sets sail!
 Pray, friends, we meet no wreck, no rock,
 But weather every fiercest gale.

'Till Happy Island comes in view—
 Where roses bloom eternally,
 Where all one's fairest dreams come true,
 And summer swims like sunshine o'er the sea.
The Visionary.

SOME CONSOLATION.

ADVERTISING AGENT—What is your circulation :

HONEST EDITOR—About twenty-five——

ADVERTISING AGENT—Ah! (*Expires.*)

HONEST EDITOR—Well, I may have lost his advertisement, but I can get twenty cents a line for his death notice. All is not lost.

The Cheerful One.

A LONG WAIT.

DE SAPLEY—I'm going to kiss you when I go.

MISS CAUSTIQUE—You'll forget how to kiss by that time.

The Sneerer.

A PHILOSOPHICAL VIEW.

AUNT SALLY—What's the matter?

UNCLE JOSH—They say the cars is blocked an' can't go ahead for ten minutes.

AUNT SALLY—Well, thank goodness, they can't run over anybody for a while, anyhow.

The Motorman.

A BARGAIN.

THE STORY OF A MAN AND A WOMAN.

"I WOULD give," murmured Francis, half kneeling on the low divan beside the beautiful Ferrier, "ten years of my life to paint you as I see you now."

Miss Ferrier turned her deep impenetrable eyes upon him. The slow motion of her fan of white feathers seemed the weaving of a spell.

"I never pose for people. Why, even S——," the famous painter whose studio party she was adorning, "has asked me, and I wouldn't. It must be such a bore."

"I know it's no use asking. But, surely you have some regard for posterity."

"Not an atom. What will posterity ever do for me?"

"It will remember you as an artist—by report, and—only by report—as peerlessly beautiful. Your acting will some day be only a memory. Of your beauty you might have a lasting, unquestionable record."

"Memory—posterity! Why, I begin to feel positively antique already. What unpleasant ideas you suggest. As for records, the shop-windows are full of my photographs."

"Oh, photographs!"

"Well, do you think *you* could immortalize me then?"

"I would give something for the chance to try."

"Ah, I know you're clever, S—— thinks great things of you. But I shouldn't dare—what would he say to me?"

"He's coming to say something to you now, if I'm not mistaken," said Francis gloomily.

His five-minutes' *tête-à-tête* with the star of the evening was over. Miss Ferrier swam away on the arm of the host, and presently her pleading voice rang through the room, deeply golden like a bell. She gave a scene from "Camille," and then—a curious choice—Browning's "In a Gondola."

Afterward there was some very good music. In the course of the evening Francis, obeying an attraction to which, as usual, he yielded full sway, found himself again within Miss Ferrier's orbit. She smiled upon him, sent the man who sat nearest her for another ice, and gave Francis his seat. The extravagant and perfectly genuine admiration of the young painter seemed to appeal oddly to the spoiled beauty. She listened to his quick phrases with sparkling eyes, which encouraged while her words reproved him. At last she herself laughingly recalled his earlier speech.

"You set ten years of your life against the pleasure of painting me—what a dull one it must be!"

"No, far from it! I think I get out of life about all there is in it. But to be able to paint you as I see you to-night would mean an achievement such as ten years might not bring me in the ordinary course of things. And after all, my work is what I live for."

"That is, if you succeeded. And for the chance, as you put it, how much would you sacrifice of that precious existence of yours?"

To this mocking question the artist by way of answer flung open his hands to indicate the uncalculated outpouring of his heart.

"Do you tie me down to weights and measures? If there is an equivalent within my power name it."

The spirit of mischief or of malice flashed for an instant in her eyes, and then vanished in their shadowy depths.

"I am not good at a bargain, and in this case I wish to treat you generously. Ten years of your life is more than you dare promise even at the altar. Even one year would weigh far too heavily in the scale, unless I juggled it a bit; and, as I said, I am in the mood of being not only honest, but even generous. Shall we say a month? I have often wondered," she added, musingly, "how it would seem to own a slave."

Francis eyed her, and his tongue tripped over the sentence he had begun with enthusiasm. He finished it, however, with no perceptible loss of fervor.

"Ah, yes, I've heard plenty of people swear that they asked nothing better," said Miss Ferrier, austere. "I don't mean that sort of thing—it's too flimsy. I should like, though, to try the real thing—just for curiosity's sake. If I sit to you," she ended, suddenly, "will you give me a month of your life?"

She looked at Francis gravely, an enigmatical tremor about the corners of her mouth. This dawning smile was irresistible. Far from any notion of retreat, he caught up the glove with eager gallantry, and closed the bargain on the instant. This little by-play had taken barely ten minutes. Miss Ferrier dismissed him with a careless smile, and turned to meet other claims upon her attention. A little later she left the party. Francis, adroitly intercepting her as she was on the point of departure, got only a curt nod for his pains. Apparently she had forgotten all about him. By the next morning he himself perforce regarded the affair as but the jest of a moment.

The event proved, however, that, far from for-

getting it, Miss Ferrier actually held to her side of the fantastic compact sealed between two glasses of Ruinart Brut. She appeared to take it and him seriously, and this Francis felt to be a compliment to his promise as a painter. It was certainly a tremendous privilege—the greater since it was his exclusively—to be allowed to study this woman whose beauty was as lyric as the Sapphic ode. As for the equivalent he was to render, he agreed apparently with her in regarding it as a burlesque, a colossal and continued joke. Miss Ferrier did not cease to joke, and she came regularly, every other day, to his studio to sit for the portrait. And Francis discovered, not only that her loveliness was greater even than he had dreamed and the problem of translating it more enthralling, but also that her generosity did not extend to the making him a present of his opportunity. There was a more or less serious side to this jest. Francis was reminded, laughingly but emphatically, that for the time being and immediately ensuing he had ceased to belong to himself; he had become her property.

Throughout the affair Francis was never able to regard it as other than a whim, a caprice conceived at the moment of his speech on their meeting, and utterly without design. It was like Grisel Ferrier to take even her whims with a certain gravity, to invest each one with the fantastic intensity of her own genius, to carry it out to the end as consistently as she played the characters of her professional repertoire, and to win for it as delighted an interest from a smaller audience. She required an audience; and, accordingly, Francis was exhibited, led in chains at the tail of her chariot. The chariot and the chains were gilt pasteboard, obviously, and she was acting through it all. But Francis had moments

when he wondered how far the spirit of the thing would carry her.

From the first their association had been divested of any suggestion of the sentimental. Francis's admiration seemed to be entirely that of the painter for a fine subject. As for Miss Ferrier, she let it be seen exactly how she amused herself with him.

He became, for the first time in his life, undeniably useful. Miss Ferrier demanded and appropriated his time and services with an unlooked-for completeness. His list of engagements was subject to her revision. Francis, from being an exceedingly popular man, became suddenly so uncertain a quantity as to suffer a loss of standing. It was thought by his feminine acquaintance that he had fallen into evil courses; nothing is quicker to take root and spread than an opinion of this sort. Moreover, whispers of his devotion to the actress, who was then much in the public eye, percolated into circles which were coincident at no point with Miss Ferrier's, and in which therefore the actual state of affairs was not known. What *was* known was that Francis, at a supper given by the actress to noted members of her profession, had ushered in the guests in the capacity of a servant in livery; that he had been challenged to a duel by the city editor (a gentleman of French extraction) of one of the daily newspapers, Francis having forced an apology for a printed paragraph reflecting on Miss Ferrier; finally, that he had got himself into a row with a well-known clubman over a ring which the latter wore on his watch-chain. Francis was accused of abstracting this ring while its owner was in a state of rosy indifference to things mundane; and he neither denied nor admitted the impeachment, retorting simply that the burden of proof rested with his accuser,

who had filched the ring, through the medium of a servant, from a lady's dressing-table.

These errors of taste and the less venial sin of breaking more than one dinner engagement with simply a word of apology at the last moment, combined to dim the young painter's social star.

A more serious result of his entanglement was that his work, outside of the portrait of Miss Ferrier, had suffered. He had, undoubtedly, an excuse for this neglect, even if he had not felt convinced that the portrait, when completed, would more than counterbalance any loss he might have sustained professionally. The fact remained that he visited his studio only on the days when Miss Ferrier was expected, and locked it up when she went away. He was not in the mood for any other work—the portrait absorbed him.

Up to a certain point it compensated for everything. He felt that he was succeeding as he had scarcely dared to hope. Already the unfinished picture had earned him, from the few brothers of his craft to whom he had exhibited it, an astonished praise which was the sincerest flattery. S—— himself had said that it was incredibly good, and had abused Francis, half enviously, for his luck.

"Griselda's whims! I believe you've had the best of this one, though you *have* been made a bit of a spectacle. What a woman she is! I'd give—something—to have your chance. And she doesn't care a snap for you."

Francis shrugged his shoulders indifferently.

"Take care, my boy. I've seen more than one man go to pieces over her. And with it all she isn't a coquette—there's the puzzle. The combination of that cool head of hers—which is just Grisel—and her magnificent good looks, which she can't help—

that's what does the mischief. If she were a worse woman she would be less dangerous."

Francis had flushed a little under this admonition. Even from his friend and patron of some years' standing he resented the familiarity of its tone. He disliked being told bluntly that Miss Ferrier cared nothing for him ; but his resentment was, after all, less on his own account than on hers. And yet all that S—— said, he had repeated to himself many times.

But during the course of his association with Grisel Ferrier, of that semblance of intimacy which naturally followed from such conditions, there had been moments, brief hours, when the actress with all her fascination had given place to the woman, even more charming in her frankness and simplicity. These glimpses were disquieting. In such moods her beauty seemed to deepen and glow like a star in the tender embrace of a summer sky. They were infrequent and short enough ; and she seemed to wish to make him forget them by subsequent flights of the wildest and most careless caprice. If this was her impulse, it failed of its point. The memory of those moments remained with the painter, and tormented him by their contrast with the images of her which an imbecile public goggled over.

The final complication of Francis's position lay in an engagement of the sort which naturally precludes any such lien as Miss Ferrier had established. The young man's betrothed, a charming light-spirited girl of excellent family, might with reason have claimed that she alone was entitled to levy in this manner upon his time and property. As a matter of fact Francis had not explained to her the cause of his repeated derelictions extending over a period of three weeks, but had ascribed them simply

to a press of work. The things which a man will do out of devotion to his art may easily remain incomprehensible to his feminine friends.

If it became necessary he was ready to explain; but he trusted to luck to prevent the gossip about him from disturbing Alice. It was for so short a time after all, and it was nearly over. The portrait neared completion. His commissions for Miss Ferrier, though frequent and occasionally arduous—such, for instance, as making the rounds of every florist's shop in the city for duplicates of a particular orchid for which she had a fancy—presented no great difficulties. For the last two weeks her principal requirement was his presence at the theatre every evening to witness her performance. She said that she liked to act to a particular person, to calculate effects, to try phrases, with a view to this single individual. It was a habit she had found of great benefit. Accordingly Francis was requested to constitute himself this especial audience of one. Once or twice Miss Ferrier asked his opinion upon certain points of the play. It was a romantic drama, which had run for fifty nights, and for which her influence had not yet been able to effect a substitute. The star made changes from night to night in the business of the play; and Francis, yawning in his seat, made sketches of the stage and of his neighbors. His unfailing appearance in the house naturally attracted the attention of his acquaintances; and this was in fact the cause one day of a sudden storm—a bolt out of a clear sky—under which his nerves still shook when, the same afternoon, at the fixed hour of 2, he awaited Miss Ferrier at his studio.

She came promptly, as always, accompanied by the maid, who was required to get her into the gorgeous gown of golden brocade, and humming a lit-

A BARGAIN.

the tune of *Figaro's*. She was in a frivolous mood, which seemed to Francis, whose fingers trembled with the brush, and whose eyes blurred the brilliant canvas before him, an unbearable tax upon his strained self-control.

After she had taken her pose in the great carved chair upon the model throne, she ran on for some minutes about the prospect of the new play and the distinguished dramatist she had met at supper the previous night, who had offered to write a play for her; talking, as her custom was with him, more for herself than for her auditor. Francis, his face flushing nervously, realized that he was unfit for work; he did not dare touch the picture, which lacked now only the subtle, infinite last touches. He threw down his brushes with a sort of despair and confessed his inability to go on.

"Well," said Miss Ferrier mildly, "you might have told me before I got my gown on. What's the matter?" she asked, scrutinizing his profile with a faint uneasiness.

"Why—I've had rather a shaking-up this morning. I don't stand those things well." What's the matter? You painters! You're nothing but a parcel of nerves, anyhow—a feather, a breath is enough to upset you."

Francis turned and fixed his eyes, of a curious light grayish green, upon her.

"I think I've shown that I can stand a good deal," he said, grimly.

"From me, you mean? Well, who's to blame for that? Perhaps your 'shaking-up' to-day has some thing to do with me."

"I suppose it has."

"Don't try to saddle your responsibilities on me, that's all, *mon ami*. Are you paying too dear for

your whistle? You would have it, you know. And why should I give it to you for nothing?"

"Why, indeed? You are a good bargainer."

Grisel leaned back in her chair and regarded him indolently from under her long black lashes.

"And you are not? I don't know. You have done many things for me—you got back my ring, you muzzled that horrid little Neuville, and you have amused me, oh, many times! But, after all, I have done something for you, eh?"

She pointed to the large canvas on which bloomed the reflection of her royal beauty.

"Oh, for heaven's sake, don't talk so cold-bloodedly!" cried Francis. "Have I said anything about bargaining? I'm simply wondering if I haven't made a fool of myself."

"Are you really in doubt? But, seriously, what does that mean except that you are weighing what you have gained from me against what I have made you pay, and that you feel you've been cheated?"

"You *are* hard—as iron," said Francis, gazing at her. "What do you care what becomes of me?" After a pause, he added sullenly, "My engagement is broken."

"What do I care for that? What a boy you are! Is it that you hold me responsible? It is broken because of me—is that what you mean?"

"Yes, that's what I mean."

"And what do you expect me to do? Accept the responsibility meekly, and try to compensate you?" Grisel laughed, and the note of good-humored scorn rang through her voice. "Well, I decline to do either. I think your shoulders are broad enough to carry this affair. Do you take me for a fool? I can see that your heart is not broken."

A BARGAIN.

Francis looked up angrily. "If you think I don't care——"

"Shall I think you a pitiable weakling? Don't I know that, if you yourself had the strength of steadfastness, you could have held that girl? No, it was because you were drifting, and knew it, that you let her go. And now you come to me!"

Grisel made the points of this speech superbly, and her mobile face reflected and emphasized every shade of meaning. Francis's eyes were fascinated. She rose, stepped down from the model throne, and stood facing him.

"Haven't I seen all that, you foolish boy? You let her go because of me, yes—and you were glad to do it. You are glad to be free, and yet I believe, after all your complaint about my tyranny, that you would this minute bind yourself my slave for life! Well—have I read you rightly, you silly conundrum?"

Against the power that spoke in the poise of her head, her smiling glance, her every tone, all the weapons of Francis were but straws. He simply looked at her.

"I see that. And I see, too, how you hesitate—how you fear for your dignity, if I should not accept the sacrifice—or if I should. Truly, it's a sad dilemma; I appreciate your feelings."

"If you did," he murmured, "you would be careful, just now, what you said."

"I think," she responded calmly, "that there is nothing more to be said."

She turned away, called her maid, and went back to the dressing-room. Francis stared after her, and then at the picture, her counterpart—poignantly beautiful, brilliant as a burst of sunlight on a dull day, flashing out in tones of yellow and orange, all a setting for the marvel of her face.

When she came back, rustling in her dark green cloth and furs, he was sitting before the picture, his head bowed on his arms. At the look on his face as he sprang up, she laid her finger on her lips.

"No, no—I must ask! Is it no use"——

"My dear boy, none. You believe me?"

"I can't believe that it's all—in vain. How can it be? Why"——

"How full you are of your own emotions! How important they seem to you! You can't believe that this feeling can be meant to end in nothing, and so you would stammer it out in words—you who have a magnificent medium of expression there ready to your hand! Have as many emotions as you like, but express them with your brush. Then you move us, you win us. You are a poet; we cannot help listening to you. And when you put yourself on a level with all the others, how can we help laughing at you, if only from the force of contrast? Oh, Dick, put your emotions into your work! Look what you have made there. Isn't that worth while? You have succeeded; you've done what you said you would give ten years of your life to do. And it has cost you—barely a month!"

"Laugh at me to the end; it's like you. I love you, and you advise me to paint a picture! What have a square of canvas and a lot of paints to do with the matter? Can I live on those? And you—are you incapable of feeling, or is it that you follow your own precept, 'put your emotions into your work,' and so have no more heart than a sawdust doll."

Her eyes wavered and seemed to deepen humidly.

"If I did, it would be better for me, I suppose. My advice is sound, believe me. We artists, why are we blessed with this power of self-expression if

NOT IN THE DECALOGUE.

it is not to save us from the blunders of 'the others'? We can make beautiful things of our emotions; what do they make of theirs? And we, when we try it, out-blunder the blunderers. We make beautiful things out of paint and sound and movement; but oh, Dick, what a mess we make of living!"

Her last look was for the golden picture on the easel. It seemed, when she had gone, to possess and fill the room with a haunting, compelling presence—a smiling beauty whose unconcern alone was ominous. The picture triumphed over the man sitting with hidden face.

The Romancer.

 NOT IN THE DECALOGUE.

A PAIR of gloves,
Two perfect loves,
She dropped in her umbrella;
The while the clerk,
With maudlin smirk,
A 'kerchief tried to sell her.

Floorwalker saw;
With outstretched paw
He quick-stepped to detain her.
But she's a swell.
A prison cell?
Dear, no. 'Tis kleptomania.

The Magistrate.

Swelltop—Are you going to attend the ball in costume?
Van Clove—It's pretty cold to go without, isn't it?

TO A SOUBRETTE.

I LOVE you for your baby face,
And for your perky, saucy air ;
I love you for your "fairy" grace,
And for your fluffy, Klondike hair.
I just adore your wicked wink,
Your dance and kick so full of guile ;
Your every naughty, cute high jink,
And then your "smile!" Ah, me, I think
That it is just the dearest "smile!"

My dear Soubrette, your head is light—
But then, forsooth, so is your heart ;
You're not a star, yet every night
You twinkle-twinkle through your part.
You're not a "diamond in the sky,"
But you're a jewel of the earth—
Although it's true you're living high,
And, *Bradstreet's* standpoint reckoned by,
It isn't much that you are worth !

Dance on, dance on, O dear Soubrette !

My love will ever burn the same ;

Kick higher, higher—higher yet !

Each kick is fuel to the flame.

And that, dear girl, I'll not be true

O be not troubled, have no fears ;

My passion is not sudden—new—

To flame and die: I've worshipped you,

My dear Soubrette, for forty years !

The Veteran.

SHADOWS ILLUMINED.

BEING A TRUE STORY OF ONE OF THE PICTURES OF
THE YEAR.

GILL stood at the foot of the long, narrow stairs, surveying them critically. "Of course he's at the top," she said; "they always are—and no lift! Poor Van! I ought to have married him!" She mounted three flights with a brisk step that left her breathless at the end of the fourth. For a moment she leaned against the balustrade, her heart beating violently; then she knocked at the studio door. There was no response, and she beat an impatient tattoo with her knuckles—she was not in the habit of being kept waiting. She could hear footsteps as of a person crossing the room, and the door was opened by a swarthy man whose great shock of black hair, and the dingy red jersey he wore, gave him a certain gipsy picturesqueness.

"Good-morning," the girl said, with a little accent; "this is Mr. Drayton, I believe?"

"Won't you come in?" the man replied, kicking aside some rubbish to make way for her.

Gill entered, and stood in the middle of the room taking in its disorder with a smile-lit critical eye. Everything had the ragged, dusty appearance that betokened negligence rather than the confusion that is picturesque. Slovenly was the outward expression of it. Had Van come to that?

Drayton stood waiting for her to open the conversation.

"If you are quite done staring at me," she said, breaking the silence, "perhaps you will ask me to sit down!"

"I beg your pardon," he stammered, dumping a pile of cardboard out of a chair, and pulling it up for her; "I seem to have forgotten my manners."

"And a lot of other things besides, eh, Van?" She spoke without any accent now, and lifted the closely-dotted veil that had partially concealed her face.

"Gill!" he gasped, with his eyes riveted on her; "it isn't possible!"

"Everything is possible," she remarked, coolly; "even that I should run over from Paris to see you. Upon my word, you're not very cordial—you haven't even shaken hands with me!"

"When did you come?" he managed to ask, though his tongue felt dry and parched, and he made no movement toward her.

"For pity's sake, don't get tragic, Van!" the girl said impatiently. "I can't talk while you stand devouring me like that! Come and sit down and be sensible. I *did* succeed in surprising you, didn't I?" and she laughed delightedly.

"When did you come, Gill?" he repeated, dropping on a divan, and pushing a rattle under the cushions out of sight.

"Yesterday, on the *St. Louis*. Just a sudden freak to have a look at my country and you. We're staying at the Moreland, Tommie and I—it's so deadly respectable! You remember Tommie, don't you? She's the best of chums—always around when I want her and never when I don't."

"Why didn't you send me word, Gill?"

"Van! Van!" she cried, protestingly, "you're worse than the witness-stand. It has been nothing but '*why, why,*' since I came in. As if I ever knew why! And I did not come all this distance to be cross-examined!" She left her chair and sat down

beside him on the divan, throwing off her furs with a graceful movement. "Aren't you glad to see me, Van?" and then, as if no answer were necessary, she sprang up and went over to an easel, examining a canvas that was wet. "Cherubs!" she exclaimed, "and exquisitely tender they are, too! How long have you been going in for that sort of thing?"

"Some months," he answered, mechanically.

She turned and looked at him.

"Van," she said, "you're a stupid old thing—I'm disappointed in you. I thought it would be such fun to drop in like this, so I looked you up in the directory, this morning, and I climbed up all those awful stairs just to see for myself how you were getting on, and really you've been abominable—you haven't any manners at all!"

"Gill! Gill! You do not know."

"Yes, I do know," she interrupted. "I know that America does not agree with you—you look completely done. Come back to Paris with me."

The man took a step toward her and stopped. From the adjoining room came a faint, peevish wail.

"Van," the girl said, facing him, "I know why you got out of Paris, and I was sorry—very sorry, but I let you go. There were so many others," she said, wearily, "only you took it more tragically than the rest. Sometimes it has worried me that I spoiled your work there. Often I have been tempted to send for you, but you see"—speaking more lightly—"I never did. I thought I would wait until I just couldn't wait any longer, and here I am! Van!" she cried, merrily, "isn't that a confession?"

From the adjoining room the faint, peevish wail deepened into a lusty cry, that was broken by a woman's voice droning monotonously. A startled

look came into the girl's eyes, and she turned to Drayton inquiringly.

He straightened himself with a visible effort, and taking her hand in his drew her to the other end of the studio. "I can't go back to Paris with you, dear, because of—that," he faltered, glancing toward the door, through which a sing-song lullaby now came in snatches.

"Van!" she cried, in a low, tense whisper; then, with a half-articulate cry, she buried her face in the cushions.

"Gill, Gill!" he cried, beseechingly, "look at me—laugh at me, dear. See, I am not worth anything else—only to be laughed at. You know you always laughed at me."

She raised her head as if in obedience to his will, but her eyes went by his face and rested on the canvas. "How old is he, Van?" she asked, quietly.

"Six months. May I tell you about it, dear?"

She nodded her head, and, going over to the window, pulled back the tapestry that covered it, and let her gaze go out over the roofs and chimneypots. How dingy and sordid and commonplace it all seemed! Beyond and above was the sky, a vivid blue flecked with tiny clouds, but she did not see it—darkening shadows obscured her vision.

Drayton followed her, and rested one knee on a chair behind her, leaning heavily on the back while he talked. The lullaby had ceased, and the silence about them was oppressive. "I married her, Gill, six months after I left you. I thought I was a fool ever to have dreamed of you—I, a poor devil of a painter, to whom you were kind, and you with all the world from which to choose!"

"And if I did not choose the world?"

"Ah, Gill!"

"Perhaps, too, you think I made you one of us out of pure *kindness*?" she asked, scornfully.

"Dear, I did not dare think—how could I? And you laughed when I came away." He waited a moment but she made no comment, and he went on, slowly. "The love of you was like a fever that consumed me, but I did not mean it should weaken me, so I worked—God in heaven, how I worked those first months! And I began to gain recognition and make a place for myself, and always I said, 'It is Gill who is doing it.' I saw very few people those days, dear; no women but my models."

"Ah!" she interjected.

"She was a sweet, slender little thing, and one day, when, in spite of everything, I went to pieces, she nursed me and pulled me through. When I got about again we were married. That is about all of it, dear."

"Does she love you, Van?"

"She loves the child."

Gill stood rigidly by the window, and when she spoke her question startled the man behind her. "Have you made money?" she asked, abruptly.

"Gill!"

"I have a right to ask—a *right*!" she reiterated, fiercely.

"She seems to be quite satisfied," he said, succinctly.

"But you yourself. What sacrifices have you not had to make. Ah, I know," she went on, hurriedly, "how men like you have no consciousness of the practicalities of life until they are thrust upon you, and then you are appalled. But you would fight your way through it all, because"——

"Don't, dear," he interrupted. "I can't bear it."

"But I *shall* praise you," she exclaimed, turning to face him where he still rested with one knee on the chair, "and I love you—*love you*, do you understand? But I am going back to Paris with Tommie." She spoke quietly, with the ease of a woman who has complete possession of herself. "I was deadly tired of it all over there, dear, and I wanted you." For a moment her eyes looked into his; then she laughed and reached out for her boa on the divan. "I should have grown deadly tired of you, too, probably, and I should have spoiled you utterly. I adore spoiling people!" she said, frivolously.

Van put his hands on her shoulders and, holding her off a little, gazed searchingly into the depths of her eyes. It brought the color to her face, and his own grew white and set.

"My beautiful, impetuous Gill! God help me to be worthy of your love."

His arms dropped listlessly and she moved away to hide the pain that quivered in her face. Before the easel she stopped, and spoke so low that the words seemed to die on her lips: "If I could see him—once!"

But they roused the man, who turned eagerly toward her: "Do you mean it, Gill?"

Already he had opened the door and was peering into the inner room; then he motioned her to follow him. "She has slipped out; she often does while he sleeps," he whispered.

The girl tiptoed in and stood quite still a moment to accustom herself to the half light of the room. A smothered cry of admiration escaped her as her gaze rested on the quaint old cradle, in which the child lay amid a mass of ruffles and lace. His golden hair was matted into little damp rings about his head, and his cheeks were flushed to a delicate pink. One

tiny hand was thrust up on the pillow, the fingers curled like rose petals. Dropping on her knees, Gill laid her face for a moment beside his on the pillow; then she kissed him. He stirred a little, and, frightened lest she had awakened him, she drew away. Drayton lifted her to her feet and led her out of the room.

Miss Marston was dining at the Embassy and amusing herself by drawing out the man who had taken her in to dinner. The agility with which he took his cue rather deprived her of any zest in the game, so that it was with more than her usual charm that she turned to the man on her left.

"You are going to tell me something very interesting, are you not, Mr. Kent?"

"If I may talk about you."

"Ah! that is not 'playing fair,' as we say at home." She shrugged her beautiful shoulders and turned away from him.

"Miss Marston," he said pleadingly, "I will be good. May I talk about a compatriot of ours?"

"By all means. Is he particularly original?" She turned her face toward him, and he regarded her with keen, amused eyes.

"You take it for granted it is a *man*?" he said, smiling.

"You promised to be interesting, Mr. Kent."

"God help the women!" Then, leaning toward her: "The point of view is simply a question of sex, perhaps?"

"You were going to talk about a compatriot, were you not? Original, you said, and"—she looked beyond him vaguely.

"Genius, I call it," he answered, fixing his eyes on her face so that she turned her back to him.

"He has done one great thing for the world, and God knows how many that the world will never know of!"

"I think I should like to meet your friend," she said, with more seriousness than she had shown. "Did you bring him over with you, Mr. Kent?"

"I brought his picture for the Salon. It represents the best there is in him."

"Tell me all about it," she said, with a pretty air of interest.

"It is not exactly a dinner story, and you are the one woman in Paris to whom I would talk about him."

Her eyes thanked him, and he lowered his voice that their neighbors might not hear: "He came home three years ago, and we all marvelled at him—he had been striding away ahead of the fellows here, and his work showed it. Well, at first he worked with a sort of frenzy, and we saw almost nothing of him. Then I went off to Mexico, and when I came back I heard he had married his model, Nora Perth, a girl without a shred of reputation and an air of childish innocence that was amazing. She had 'worked on his sympathies,' I suppose, and when I saw how she had woven a net about him I hadn't the heart to enlighten him. But it was terrible to see him dragged down like that! Even the child he idolized was not his own."

Miss Marston crumbled the bread at her plate and waited for him to go on.

"That woman was like a millstone round his neck, and because of the demands she made upon him he did poorer work, turning off things that sold, giving himself no respite from the daily grind."

"Why did you let him sacrifice himself like that?" she asked intently.

"I do not know," he answered slowly. "Perhaps I did not realize it then as I do now. Perhaps I hesitated to interfere."

"Hesitated to interfere!" she repeated scornfully. "Yes, I know; it's a phrase we use to cover our moral cowardice."

"Aren't you a little severe, Miss Marston?"

"Weren't you severe to him—to see him go down, down like that, and never so much as lift your hand to hold him back? Oh, it was cruel of you!"

"I think he worked out his own salvation, Miss Marston. About six months ago I began to see much more of him again, and he confided to me that he was going to do something really worth while. And as I lounged about the studio I seemed to feel his creation in the air; he was like a man inspired. And sometimes, since, I have thought he may have had a premonition of what was coming—there was such an undercurrent of sadness in all he did." Mr. Kent lifted his wine glass and drained it.

"And the picture?" the woman said softly.

"It grew and grew, Miss Marston; the sleeping child, first, and then the woman—such a woman! All his mind and strength seemed concentrated on that exquisite bending figure. One day I said to him, 'Old man, she is a divine creation; she could not exist.' 'Yes,' he answered, 'she does exist.' 'In your dreams, then.' 'Perhaps,' was all he said, but—Miss Marston! What a catastrophe! I beg ten thousand pardons!" A stream of claret was dripping from the cloth to her white satin gown.

"My fault, I fancy, Mr. Kent. Really it's of no consequence," she said languidly, biting her lips to bring the color back. "It was very stupid of me to interrupt your story."

"It is good of you to let me talk so long and I

have nearly finished. The picture I want you to see, it will speak for itself. I am not sure that I understand it exactly and he never explained it to me, but the genius is there, you will see."

"Perhaps, Mr. Kent," the woman said, with a certain tremulous sweetness in her voice, as she picked up her gloves and rose in answer to the signal, "perhaps, when you bring your friend to see me I will ask him to interpret his picture."

"He died, Miss Marston, two weeks before I sailed. The picture is a legacy," he said, watching her closely.

"I congratulate you upon so valuable a possession," she replied, bending to pick up her skirts. And in another moment she had joined the little procession of women that was vanishing through the portières.

The Platonist.

AFTER THE SUPPER.

MISS INGENTUE (*in a cosy nook with Count Stuckup of the Legation*)—Count, what are those funny little gimcracks you foreign swells wear all over your chests? This one, for instance?

COUNT (*with hauteur*)—Zat, Mam'zelle, is ze famous Diamond Garter of ze nobility.

MISS INGENTUE—Really? Now what an absurd idea for you continental people to wear your diamond garters on your chest! Of course we women wear them——

VOICE FROM BEHIND—(*sternly*)—Ethel, dear, isn't it getting rather cool out here?

COUNT (*rising and bowing low*)—Oh, no, Madame? Quite ze contrary, in fact; quite ze contrary.

The Eavesdropper.

A BALLAD OF CHRISTMAS BURDENS.

THE burden of gay greeting. Vain delight,
For who among us means a word we say?
In hackneyed speech we clothe our message trite,
And idly voice the wishes of the day.
We smile and bow in our accustomed way,
While our indifference we try to hide,
Stifling our boredom, striving to be gay;
This is the end of every Christmas-tide.

The burden of much giving. Every year
We realize anew the fearful fraud
This custom is. And then, albeit we sneer,
We buy afresh the bauble and the gaud.
Hoping thereby to win a hollow laud,
Or gain a compliment to feed our pride;
Contented if the giddy world applaud—
This is the end of every Christmas-tide.

The burden of scant shekels. Woe impends
The wight whose way is with this danger fraught;
Lured by the Spirit of the Times he spends
More than he meant to and more than he ought.
And when he views the gew-gaws he has bought,
And sees his empty pockets yawning wide,
He sadly bows his head in anxious thought—
This is the end of every Christmas-tide.

The burden of swift shopping. Crowded streets
And rushing messengers our way impede.
Our innocence the wily fakir cheats,
And fleeces us, weak victims to his greed.

Or haply haughty clerks pay us no heed :
 At our approach they partly turn aside
 Until our ire our patience doth exceed ;
 This is the end of every Christmas-tide.

The burden of great eating. Other days,
 It matters not so much how we may dine ;
 But at this festival tradition says
 We must bestir, and kill the fatted kine.
 The board must groan 'neath rarest food and wine,
 Boar's head and wassail bowl we must provide
 That our digestion we may undermine ;
 This is the end of every Christmas-tide.

ENVOY.

Comrades, and ye who Christmas pleasures seek,
 These timely thoughts to you I would confide ;
 Harken unto the wisdom that I speak :
 This is the end of every Christmas-tide.

The Iconoclast.

APPRECIATION.

HE—I am going to kiss you the next time I call.

SHE—You must be neighborly and come often.

The Good Thing.

A FAIR ENTHUSIAST.

FRIEND—What is your idea of Paradise, Miss Edith ?

AMATEUR ACTRESS—An eternal performance of
 "Romeo and Juliet," with complimentary notices
 to read between the acts !

The Lady Reader.

LEGISLATION UP TO DATE.

THE FLOURISHING FARCE AT ALBANY.

SCENE—*The Albany legislative chamber. Discovered, an aggregation of hayseed lawmakers, professional politicians, lobbyists, women reformers and chorus girls. A weary band in the gallery plays "We Are the People" as an overture. As the curtain goes up the legislators burst into song.*

CHORUS OF LEGISLATORS.

In this chamber most august,
All inspired by sacred duty,
We have formed a little trust
Of intelligence and beauty.

And if our legislation should appear somewhat
unique,

You kindly will remember that's the way we earn
our pay ;

Our duty is to celebrate the farmer and the freak,
And bend the knee in homage to the sere and
seedy jay.

We recognize that everything that now exists is
wrong,

And if it ain't it's got to be corrected just the
same,

So each of us has here a bill some twenty-eight yards
long,

Designed to cover all the ground and bring us
lasting fame.

*The Speaker raps for order, and the Hon. Ichor
Floop gets the floor.*

SONG—HON. MR. FLOOP.

For forty year or thereabout
 I've been a livin' up the State,
 A raisin' whiskers, eatin' kraut,
 An' thinkin' at an awful rate;
 An' till I come to Albanee,
 W'y, no one ever heerd of me.

CHORUS OF WAYBACKS (*sotto voce*).

Until I come to Albanee,
 W'y, no one ever heerd of me.

HON. MR. FLOOP.

I guess I don't know much, by jing,
 About this legislation game,
 I don't know much of anything,
 But I'm dead sot on winnin' fame,
 An' I have got a bill, by gee,
 The freakiest thing you ever see!

CHORUS OF WAYBACKS.

We each have got a bill, by gee,
 The freakiest thing you ever see!

HON. MR. FLOOP.

An' when I introduce this bill
 The people down in York will cuss,
 An' all the papers talk until
 There's just the durnedest kind of muss;
 An' that's the way to make a hit—
 I guess there ain't no flies on it!

CHORUS OF WAYBACKS.

Yes, that's the way to make a hit—
 You bet there ain't no flies on it!

At this juncture there is great confusion, as all the waybacks attempt to present their bills at once. After much pounding with the gavel the Speaker quells the disturbance, and secures silence for a moment, during which nothing can be heard but the whizzing of the waybacks' thinking apparatus.

THE SPEAKER—Now, gentlemen, one at a time. The bills of the various members will be recorded by title.

HON. MR. FLOOP—I call this dockymment of mine “An Act to Prohibit the Riding of Bicycles in Public.” In my estimashun——

THE SPEAKER—The discussion of these bills will be heard at another time. The member from Cabbagehurst has the floor.

HON. ELIAKIM DOPDER—My bill is entitled “An Act to Prevent Love-making between Young Persons.” This is one of the greatest evils with which a legislative body has to contend——

HON. ZUBA HELLSWORTH—Excuse me. My bill is “An Act to Abolish the Printing of all News, Editorials, Poetry, Miscellaneous Articles, Cartoons and other Pictures in Newspapers.” Gentlemen I consider this bill——

HON. EMEW BUNG—One moment, please. My great bill is “An Act to Regulate Low Gowns and High Hats at Theatres.” Of course the high hat doesn't trouble any of us, gentlemen, because we're always in the front row, but——

HON. PANSY CUBBY—Sit down! I call my bill “An Act to Prohibit Baseball and All Other Sinful Amusements on Sunday.” The growing evidence of depravity on the part of people who work all week——

HON. GIVUSSALL PAINS—My bill is “An Act to

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HON. PANSY CUBBY—Sit down! I call my bill “An Act to Prohibit Baseball and All Other Sinful Amusements on Sunday.” The growing evidence of depravity on the part of people who work all week——

HON. GIVUSSALL PAINS—My bill is “An Act to

Compel Hotel Guests to Eat Nothing but Rubber Sandwiches." The excellent quality of the rubber sandwich has never been so universally recognized as during the past year——

HON. PRETZEL SPOOK—Silence! My bill is the greatest yet. I call it "An Act to Prohibit the Wearing of Tights or Anything Else on the Stage." I submit, gentlemen, that this measure will be satisfactory to every member of this honorable body——

THE SPEAKER—These bills are all excellent, and will doubtless create the sensations desired. The reading of others will have to be postponed for the present. There is a lady reformer here who hasn't made a speech or anything for twelve minutes, and if she doesn't have a chance at once I fear for the consequences. I have the honor of introducing to you Mrs. Prune-Prigg, of New York.

A lady with a determined cast of countenance and a reticule marches to the front and strikes a militant attitude.

SONG—MRS. PRUNE-PRIGG.

If you want to see a goddess of reform,
Look at me!

CHORUS OF PROFESSIONAL POLITICIANS.

Hully gee!

MRS. PRIGG—There are those who say that I am not
so warm,

But you'll see!
O, I make it hot for crime,
Night and day and all the time,
And my virtue is sublime,
All agree!

CHORUS OF PROFESSIONAL POLITICIANS.

Hully gee!

MRS. PRIGG—I know every little thing that smacks
of vice,

Very well ;

CHORUS OF PROFESSIONAL POLITICIANS.

Wot t'ell !

MRS. PRIGG—I am on to everything that isn't nice,
Truth to tell ;
And I've here a bill to fix
All the office-seeking Micks,—
To professional politics
It's the knell !

CHORUS OF PROFESSIONAL POLITICIANS.

Wot t'ell !

THE SPEAKER—Madam, there's no doubt in the world about that bill passing. It will go through with a whoop ; but not to-day. Will to-morrow do ? Here are a number of chorus ladies waiting to be heard, and if you'll take that seat over there facing the corner you may hear something to your disadvantage. Ladies, what can we do for you ?

MISS DOLLY DUMPLING, OF BROADWAY—We heard that you were going to make a bad, bad law up here and we have come to lobby against it.

THE SPEAKER—Miss—madam—we never make bad laws. That is an impossible presumption. Our laws are all good laws—regular Sunday-schoolers. The particular measure to which you refer, I suppose, is the bill that has just been introduced here by the member from Frogville, entitled “An Act to Prohibit the Wearing of Tights or Anything Else on the Stage.” Is that it ?

MISS DUMPLING—Oh, yes, that's it. We protest against that, indeed we do. We kick.

THE SPEAKER—Well, how high do you kick?

MISS DUMPLING—We'll show you with pleasure.
And we'll sing you a song, too.

THE SPEAKER—That's good. Now, don't sing us anything but a song, please.

SONG—CHORUS LADIES.

We are each a dainty, dimpled little blonde,
All members of the gay Casino chorus;
Of the fuzzy-wuzzy baldhead we are fond,
And the Johnnie-boys who swear that they adore
us;

But one there is that we love more than these;
For him our passion equals the equator;
We've a weakness that amounts to a disease
For the Populistic hayseed legislator!

(Kicking ad. lib. Loud applause.)

We like to skip and frolic on the stage.

We're fond of cigarettes and champagne suppers;
We like the men who don't inquire our age,
And who see that we are never on our uppers;
We like a diamond necklace now and then,
And flowers by the bushel—ah! but greater
The love we bear that wootsiest of men—
The Populistic hayseed legislator!

(S'more kicking. Delirious applause.)

SOLO—MISS DOLLY DUMPLING.

A pair of baby eyes—

A bunch of golden hair—

Two legs of proper size—

(Though pads will answer there)—

Rouge used without restraint—

Some fancy name like "Pearl"—

Some tights that fit like paint—

And that's the Chorus Girl!

Her make-up, then, behold ;
 Now solons wise and great,
 One thing I would be told
 Before it is too late ;
 The law proposed by you
 Does not respect her rights,
 Pray, tell me what she'll do
 Without—without her tights ?

MR. SPEAKER—We couldn't answer that in a thousand years. Perhaps the proper thing for her to do would be to go in swimming. I'll put it to a vote to-morrow. It's now high time to adjourn. Will somebody make a motion to that effect ?

Nobody seems inclined to make such a motion, and the Speaker declares an adjournment anyhow. Thus ends one day's session of the Freak Legislature.

The Farceur.

A MODERN ENOCH ARDEN.

Snow—pale, haggard snow—wan, white snow—snow—snow—snow ! Hark ! The mellow chime of Christmas bells ! Hark ! The sullen crunching of hoary rime beneath impatient feet—an in-crashing door—the rude interruption of Yule-tide merry-making !

“Me husband ! Me long-lost husband !

“Aye, aye, woman ! Aye, aye ! Back from a watery grave !”

“Mon Dieu ! What does this all mean ?”

“Mean ! Mean ! Why, ten years ago I was the living skeleton in the museum where yonder woman was the fat lady. We married—I grew fleshy. Shipping before the mast to reduce my weight we were wrecked on a desert island. I have been rescued. I return home to find——”

"That I am still the fat lady, but have married again. Yonder French sword-swallower is my husband."

"Now by the forked beard of Neptune, I'll have his life!"

"Sacre bleu! Eet ees terrible! We fight!"

"Francois! Bill! No bloodshed—no bloodshed!"

"Ha! An idea then!"

"What ees eet?"

"We will play a game of cards. The fat lady shall be the stakes!"

"Mais, but wait! Who shall hold the stakes?"

"Ten thousand curses! No one man can! Draw! There is nothing left us but to fight!"

Hark! A woman's scream—the clash of steel! Hark! The mellow chime of Christmas bells—the frosty air vibrant with Yule-tide carols.

The Tragedian.

WOULDN'T THINK OF IT.

FIRST TRAMP—I had a chance wunst ter go into de burglary line, but that wuz agin me principles.

SECOND TRAMP—Yer wouldn't do dat, eh?

FIRST TRAMP—Naw! Tink of fellers workin' t'ree an' four hours tryin' t' open a safe.

The Cracksmen.

YES AND NO.

"I CABLED the governor I needed a thousand at once."

"Did it go?"

"The cable did, but the touch didn't."

The Mourner.

TO PASS THE TIME.

AN INCIDENT IN THE PARISIAN LIFE OF A FAIR
AMERICAN.

Good-evening, Mrs. Percival—awfully glad to see you!”

“Oh, how d’ do, Mr. Lawson, this is delightful, I’m sure.”

This greeting, indifferent on the part of the man, demure on the part of the woman, caused two or three of those at Mrs. Belton’s dance to raise their eyebrows and exchange smiles.

She stands tall and graceful, with a suspicion of an irrepressible smile just hovering around the corners of her lips, as she calmly views the dancers over her shoulders, and gives her quick, characteristic nod to one or two. She is an unusually “stunning” woman, about twenty-seven, Gibsonian in type, especially in the way her handsome head is set on her beautiful shoulders. They rather force the conversation, and it is with a perceptible increase of animation that he says, seeing her husband and another man coming up to them, “I am glad to have had this short time with you unmolested, and shall hope for a dance later,” and bows and walks away. She looks after him and her eyelids lower slightly, but no change of expression betrays her feeling at his careless behavior.

She turns to the man who has approached with her husband and says: “No, thanks, I am not dancing to-night; it’s too warm, and, besides, we have been out on the drag all day long—driven fifty miles—and I’m done up,” smiling at the evident ad-

miration in the eyes of this boy of twenty-two, who has just been presented. He is a clever young artist, who has been made much of all winter, and he takes her refusal to heart. The orchestra plays an old and subtle waltz; Cobb, the artist, is looking at her and wishing that he might take her in his arms and float off to this most bewitching music, when he observes that her face changes suddenly from laughing nonchalance to a cold hard expression. Looking up he sees Carey Lawson coming toward them slowly, his pale clear-cut face wearing an impenetrable expression. He looks at her straight and hard.

"They tell me, Mrs. Percival," he says, "that you are not dancing to-night, but I thought you might make an exception in favor, not of myself, but of this music, which I have heard you say you particularly fancy." He makes this little speech calmly and slowly, without a trace of eagerness, and awaits her reply.

She hesitates, then turning to Cobb, says: "Mr. Lawson has explained why I shall dance this waltz, but I shall dance no more to-night."

They wait until a certain bar comes in the music, where everything stops for a long, lingering note, which someone once described as a "long kiss," and then languidly float off.

"I was amazed," she says, "that you came for me to-night."

"And I," he answers, "was amazed that you would dance with me, although you promised once that this waltz should always be mine."

"Why should I not?" she asks quickly; then, "Why did you do it?" giving him a swift glance.

"To try an experiment," he says, softly, "to try and coax back the old feeling if I could. It cuts me

up dreadfully to feel that my 'beautiful human illusion,' though beautiful and human still"—he smiles faintly—"is an illusion no more."

"I shall not inquire into that speech, although it is not remarkably subtle, nor shall I get tremendously angry and send you away," she replies, rather quickly, and half closes her eyes as they dance steadily and perfectly on. The music rests once more on the long note. Lawson, looking down at her, tries to make her eyes meet his, while both are serious, and she has gone a little pale. Suddenly she stops, and, laughing, says, "Thank you, I think this is enough. Why *will* Marnie fill her rooms on an April night—with the thermometer gone up beyond recall—with such a crowd? I am going to withdraw."

"There is," he speaks rapidly, "in Marnie's house, down at the other end of the hall, a little room, cool and quiet. It was there, I believe——"

"It *was* there, yes," interrupts she, hurriedly, "but why go back?"

"Do you know," he says, "I should like to talk it over autopsically."

She laughed a little. "There are some people who have no reverence for dead things. Let us go before that mooning Pole gets here—he is *en route*. I believe he says 'Mrs. Percival is the queen of women,' and he is content 'only to watch her.' " She laughs lightly, and, arrived at the little room, sinks indolently into a deep low chair against dark cushions, which outline her figure in its close-fitting satin with a long overdress of lace hanging straight from the neck and now lying in exquisite folds about her.

He stands and looks at her, a slow smile growing on his face. "You are looking very fit to-night,

and—er—so very alluring—if you will allow so direct a compliment.”

“Thank you,” she retorts dully. “Compliments from the jaded are hard to get.”

“Do not look so cool and determined, Julie. What is this that you have on to-night, anyway? It’s the most illusive and fiendishly fascinating gown I ever saw, even on you.”

“You are a little vulgar, I think,” she says, with calmness, “for you permit yourself, emancipated, the same familiarity of speech which you used—er—in other times. You must remember there is a difference between a slave and a free man. More is expected in the way of light and education in the latter.”

He seats himself at her side. “In other words, Julie, I must behave like your friends in the first stage,” taking her fan and drawing it across his lips. “Who is it now?”

“What do you mean?” she says quickly. “I do no understand you.”

“Yes, you do—pardon me—perfectly. Who has taken my place?”

“I do not understand,” she repeats, a gleam coming to her eyes. “You seem to think I require always an attaché to my husband. Can’t you give me credit for at least a few months’ mourning over one dear dead?”

Their eyes meet and they both laugh. She slips off her glove, which leaves her arm bare almost to the shoulder. Unfurling her fan with her right hand, she holds her left out to him, with a mischievous glance. “It was very nice while it lasted,” she sighs. He takes her hand and lays it across his palm, and, lifting the fingers one by one, asks: “Do you want to go into it?”

"Yes."

"Well, then, what is puzzling me now is to think that once the touch of your fingers almost drove me mad, while now I am unmoved. It's a handsome hand, with its long white fingers and soft white skin. It's a hand that looks as if it had a history worth reading. One wishes he were a Cheiro long enough to discover it."

She withdrew her hand and clenched it. "Positively your voice shows a trace of interest. That will not do. See how strong it is! Hal says my muscles are like threads of steel." She paused; he waited, and in a moment she added: "To one who knows I have given the most unmistakable sign that all is over between us, in bringing in my husband's name, even going so far as to quote him. But we are wandering from the subject and our original intent in coming here."

"Do you remember," he said, "how you had been dancing enough to kill you, all night, and when you were with me you felt faint?"

"Yes, I begged you to take me where it was cool."

"And I brought you here, and you were dizzy as you crossed the threshold and fell forward. I caught you, a little roughly, I am afraid, in my anxiety to save you, and as you righted yourself you fell toward me and your eyes met mine. Gad! Shall I ever forget it." Lawson was no longer cool and self-possessed.

She regards him curiously for a moment. "Wasn't it queer, for I think you had never thought of me before that."

"No, except as a very charming woman; but that little accident, and the swift upward glance you gave me, partly of fright, as you thought your-

self falling, partly at finding yourself where you were "——

"For a flirtation pure and simple," she interrupts calmly, "that was as neat and perfect a little affair as one need have."

"It was a poem while it lasted," he says regretfully. "What a pity we could not have kept it up longer."

"I know it. Why, Carey, we might be sitting in this room looking unutterable things at each other now." They laugh again. "I believe," she continues, "I will write a story on this theme, 'Crescendo and Diminuendo' for a title. How would that be? Did you ever care, really?" she asks curiously. "Don't spare my feelings, it is all over, and just for the experience let us be honest with each other."

"I do not mind telling you," he answered, looking at her steadily, "that I should object very strongly to losing control of my *mind* sufficiently to fall in love with any woman, and most of all with you."

"Then nothing matters," said she, mockingly, "if your mind is controlled; your complacency reminds me of that of the ostrich." The remark went home.

"Remember this, then, for your satisfaction, Julie; that night, last summer, at the Cousins' lawn party, I was as much in earnest as I ever want to be."

"Yes," she assented seriously, "I think you were almost sincere then, for your words rang truer, I felt, than usual. In return for your magnanimity, I will say this. You are very good to look at. I have told you how classic your profile is—always making me think of the statue of Hermes holding the infant Dionysius. The night you came to me, and said your devotion had been remarked and what

was to be done, I almost think I showed in my face what I felt."

"Yes, you did," he said, "and as you stood before me in that clinging gray house gown—you do understand how to dress, you know—you seemed a very desirable thing to me."

There was a long pause and then she said hurriedly, "How selfish we are. It's nothing but vanity when one stops to think of it—nothing but love of power and admiration leading one to simulate what one does not feel. And you—you must always have one woman to devote yourself to. Poor Imogen," she said softly. He bit his lip. "That was detestable of you, really. You were rather nasty about that, I think. Only seventeen, an orphan, and all that sort of thing. She is madly in love with you now, as you know, and will not look at another man, and grieves terribly at what she calls the withdrawal of your friendship."

"You cannot cavil at me there, with your chain of youthful loves dancing attendance."

"Nonsense! Boys need it. The more times they fancy themselves in love the better for their moral growth. Young girls are different. However, I'm not going to start on that again."

"When were you first bored with me?" he asked, leaning forward.

"I can hardly remember," she said, carelessly, "except that I thought it was time to let it die out, and you, I think, agreed with me."

He leaned over her and took both her hands. "You know, Julie, there is something more—you remember"——

"Never mind going into it too deeply," she said quickly, her cheeks flushing.

"No, Julie, I shall speak. We do not care any

more, you and I; that is granted. I have purposely kept away from places where I knew you were to be, for the last month, to test it and see if it were true—that I had my senses back intact once more. I am satisfied, but do not try to delude me into thinking that it was all cold-blooded premeditation on your part, for if you do I shall ask you some questions ”——

She trembled and drew away from him. “Even if you think badly of me,” she said, “I must still maintain it. I did certain things, from an artistic standpoint, that the effect might not be spoiled.” Then, turning impulsively to him, she added, “Carey, even if you can look at me nowadays without thrilling, come and see me once in a while.”

“Often, if I may—you are lovelier than ever; yet it is over.”

“Yes, it is over. We have both come out of it with colors flying. And now we will simply take up the thread of our friendship here in this same room where we dropped it, for a deeper-hued one, a year ago.” She held out both hands smiling, and smiling he bent and kissed them both. “Find Hal for me and I’ll stop here,” she said. A curious look came into her eyes as the portières fell together behind him; she looked into her palms that he had just kissed; she brushed them lightly across each other, shrugged her shoulders and began to draw on her gloves.

The Story-Teller.

A SCIENTIFIC TRIUMPH.

CHOLLY—The papers say they are going to develop men from monkeys.

MAY (*meaningly*)—I should think that they would be satisfied with having developed monkeys from men.

The Degenerate.

OUR SECRET.

A STORY OF A SHUFFLE.

JACK BRANSCOMBE and his wife, my wife and I—they used to call us the “Quadruples,” for we were very much together, and, barring some differences in the shades of our hair, looked quite alike—were sitting in our favorite corner of the great piazza of the Hotel Albermarle. It was 10 o’clock, but the moon had just risen and was flooding the ocean that roared on the sandy beach below us. We had been silent, almost, until the appearance of the moon, but we had begun to chatter the moment it had appeared, as if actuated by a common impulse.

“Here we are all talking at once, now that it is half light, while before, in the dark, not a word has been spoken in our party for over an hour.” It was Jack who spoke.

My wife took up the thread of thought where he left it. “It is singular what an effect darkness has upon people,” said she. “All the way home from the Cliff House Dick and I talked in whispers—that is, the little we did talk.”

And I knew she blushed as she said this, for we had only been married a couple of months and still found each other very good company even when silent.

“It was the same with us,” added Jack’s wife.

We all laughed. They, too, were a newly-married couple, and, no doubt, had had experiences very similar to our own.

The fact is, we had hired a couple of carriages that afternoon and driven over to the Cliff House for supper. After supper we had driven back slowly along the beach. We had taken many trips like this, always separated by a hundred yards or more of roadway. We went driving together, and yet not together—just the plan for two newly married couples.

"Well," continued Jack. "I wish we had had this moonlight on the way back. I never knew Alice to be so coy as she was this evening."

"What nonsense, Jack," said she, "I was my own usual self. As to being coy, it was you who were positively cold. Why you gave a perfect gasp when I put my head on your shoulder."

"Put your head on my shoulder? You didn't have your head on my shoulder once during the drive back, and you seemed perfectly astonished when I put my arm around you and hugged you a little."

"Hugged me? You didn't do any such thing. I thought you were joking before. Now I know it."

"It's you that is joking," answered Jack. I was beginning to fear an actual quarrel, so I rushed into the breach myself.

"It had just the other effect on my wife," said I. "I never knew her to be so loving before—so demonstratively loving, I mean."

"Now you're joking," answered my wife. "On the contrary, it was you that acted like a lovesick boy, and couldn't keep your arm away from my waist."

"Now you're trying it, too," said I.

"Dick, I was never more serious in my life," she replied.

The Branscombes, beyond a doubt, in their turn feared that we were going to quarrel, for they laughed very heartily at this—too heartily, I thought.

Mrs. Branscombe broke in to change the topic. "Jack told me an awfully funny story on the way back about a woman with seven pigs and a rooster."

"What nonsense," said Jack; "I don't even know any story about seven pigs and a rooster."

"How provoking you are. But I'll tell them the story, anyway."

"Oh, I was telling my wife that story this afternoon," said I. "No, by Jove, come to think about it, it was on the way back this evening, wasn't it, Nellie?"

"I never heard the story in my life," my wife replied, very calmly.

"Well," I answered, rather crossly, "you're as provoking as——"

But I never finished the sentence, and I don't think any one noticed the fact, either, for a sudden hush fell over all of us, and a feeling of awkward embarrassment that we had never known before. As to myself, I sat quite still repeating in my mind the single exclamation, "Could it be possible? Could it be possible?" And I have an idea that the others were asking themselves the same question. It seemed an age before any one spoke again. Finally Jack got up.

"Let's go and get a cigar," said he.

I arose and accompanied him. When he reached the cigar counter he stopped and looked at me with a queer look of intelligence in his eye. I fancy that I must have answered him with the same singular look, for he took up the thread of thought at which I was already at work without another suggestion.

"You remember," he went on, "that just before we started we left the ladies in our buggies while we went back to the Cliff House to get the cigars?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Which buggy was your wife in then?" he asked.

"The one on the right," I replied.

"Exactly," he continued, "and when we came out, which buggy did you get into?"

"The one on the right," said I again.

"Correct," said he. "But the right going to the hotel was not the right coming back. Does the situation begin to dawn on you?"

"It has more than dawned," I answered, "for I see a straw-colored hair on your coat, and as my wife is a blonde and yours a brunette——"

"It seems strange that you should have a long black hair on your coat, eh?"

And, as we said this, each pulled a hair of feminine length from the other's coat.

"Great Scott!" said I.

"Holy Moses!" said he.

"There can be no doubt about it."

"Not a bit."

"I rode home with your wife."

"And I with yours."

"Well," I answered, after a pause, "it was all a mistake, and it can't be helped. There's only one thing to do, and that is to keep the girls from finding it out. You tell me the story of your ride and I'll tell you the story of mine. Then we'll be posted sufficiently to undergo a cross-examination, which, no doubt, we'll each of us get this evening. We'll each insist that we rode home with our own proper partner, that we were only joking out there when we got so mixed up, and that will fix things all right.

If we don't, there'll be a woman's quarrel over the affair."

"Good," said Jack. And we each imparted the necessary information, embarrassing as the state of affairs was. It is the only time I ever told a man I had kissed his wife and I did not get knocked down for it. Moreover, it is the only time a man ever confessed to me that he had kissed my wife and I did not knock him down for it. Then we went out to find our wives. They, too, were in earnest consultation. I am very acute of hearing, and I caught just one sentence of their conversation as we approached them. It was my wife who spoke.

"We must never let them know," said she, "because if they did they would fight and kill each other." The women had been comparing notes, too. And they had adopted a plan of action similar to our own.

The matter was never brought up in our family, and I doubt if it was in Branscombe's, for he would not be foolish enough to broach the subject, and his wife would be as anxious to avoid it. I once heard my wife saying to herself. "I'd like to scratch her eyes out," and I fancy I know whom she meant. Once she overheard me muttering, "I'd like to thrash him within an inch of his life," and she asked me whom I meant. I told her I meant the dog, but I don't think she believed me.

Whenever we meet the Branscombes, though, we are all very polite to each other, for we all recognize the necessity of keeping secret a—well, a secret that each of us knows.

The Peacemaker.

MARRIAGE is a railroad over which no return tickets are sold; but there are stop-off privileges.

MOLLY'S TIPPLE.

WITH APOLOGIES TO HUGH MORTON.

My Molly has a tiny nest
 Somewhere in the hundreds—West—
 It is just a Harlem flat,
 Snug and cosy—and all that—

Where a chap may sneak away and take a rest.
 For Molly has a cunning wink—
 She's a ballet-girl in tights of pink—
 But at home she keeps a fair
 And tasty tippie—Oh, it's rare!

Club cocktails her pet drink must be, I think.

My Molly's kiss is honey-sweet,
 My Molly's curves are hard to beat,
 And her step amid the dance
 Is as saucy as the glance

That brings us silly fellows to her feet.
 Now, Molly's feet are very nice,
 Her dance and wink are full of spice;
 But betwixt the dance in tights
 And the cocktails' rare delights

I should choose the cocktail twice—yes, in a trice.

Refrain.

Molly! Molly! your flat is very jolly,
 And your kiss is sweetest folly,

And your dancing is divine;
 But Molly! Molly! when I seek you, melancholy,
 Keep club cocktails on the ice forever, Molly, Molly
 mine!

The Parodist.

A CAPRICE OF FATE.

It was in 1861. The President had called for volunteers, and Frank Russell was among the first to offer himself for his country's service.

"It's splendid, Frank!" said his pretty little sweetheart, when, dressed in his uniform, he went to say good-bye to her. "I'm glad you've gone in as a private, for now all your honors will be of your own winning; and, remember, I expect great things of you. You are to be Commander-in-chief of the army of the United States. Nothing else will satisfy me. And, when you come home with a General's sash across your shoulder, you shall have *me* for a reward of merit."

She laughed and dropped him a curtsy. Her blue eyes were all the more luminous for the tears in them, and her face was glorified by her pride in him and her love.

"But, Kitty"—Frank began deprecatingly. In the man's eyes this scaling of the heights was not such an easy thing.

"But me no buts!" said Kitty. "You can and you shall! But Frank"—she raised herself on her tiptoes and whispered in his ear—"if you *shouldn't*, you can have me just the same."

They laughed together at her inconsistency.

"You know that I'll try," he said, earnestly.

And in an hour his regiment had marched away.

A month later, Kitty, her face pitifully tear-stained, opened the secret drawer of her writing-desk, and laid in it a newspaper clipping that told how Francis Russell, private, had fallen in front of his company, bravely trying to save his captain.

"Had he lived," the paper went on to say, "he would have been promoted on the field for gallantry."

The first step would have been gained!

Seven years after Kitty was married, and the year after that she died, when her little daughter, Kitty Warren, was born.

In the summer of 1886 Kitty Warren and Dick Newbold were walking in a national cemetery.

"I'm tired," said Kitty. "There's a bench. Why don't we sit down?"

"All right," said Dick. "You sit on the bench, and I'll sit on the ground and worship you."

There was a low white headstone just in front of the bench.

"Do you suppose the dead soldier would care?" said Kitty, uncertainly, as she rested her pretty feet on the stone.

"Care? He would be honored!" said Dick. "Let's see"—he leaned on his elbow and read the name, "'Francis Russell, 1861.' Poor fellow! He died long before you were born. Think what he missed in not knowing you!"

"Maybe he knew my mother," said Kitty, her blue eyes growing dreamily tender. "They say she was just like me."

The Old Soldier.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT.

FRIEND—I wonder what will be the next improvement in our warships?

NAVAL RESERVE MAN—I hope it will be in the grub.

The Kicker.

HE FOUND IT SO.

MERELY SUGGESTED.

A DIM and flickering flame of light
Shone o'er them as they sat in bliss,
Unheedful of the hours' swift flight,
Remembering but the time to kiss.

The tolling of a telltale clock
Aroused them from their pleasant dreams ;
It seemed at lover's joys to mock,
And turned their thoughts to earthly themes.

He rose reluctantly, and said,
"I'll have to bid good-night, you know."
She pouted sweetly, shook her head,
And whispered soft, "Not yet; don't go."

"But, dear, I must," he answer made,
And kissed away that pretty pout ;
"It's very late, I am afraid,
And e'en the fire has all gone out."

"You stupid, stupid man!" cried she,
A frown upon her lovely brow ;
"Of course it has, and can't you see
I need you more than ever now?"

The Hinder.

HE FOUND IT SO.

"THE darkest hour"—and firmer grew his stride,
And hope lit up his pale face, wan and drawn ;
"The darkest hour"—once more the baby cried—
"The darkest hour is just before the dawn."

The Happy Parent.

RATHER HEATED.

HUSBAND (*entering kitchen*)—How do you account for this? The thermometer here registers 105 degrees?

WIFE—Oh, the cook and I have just had an argument.

The Linguist.

HE WAS INTERESTED.

MAMMA—Were you interested, Waldo, in seeing the professor take snakes out of his hat?

THE BOSTON BOY—Very much. The study of optical illusions has always had a peculiar fascination for me.

The Educator.

AT THE THEATRE.

REBECCA—I would t'ink dese t'eatre programmes would be good to advertise dem pargain sales in.

KEY—Don't you vant der vimmin to vatch der blay?

The Wiseacre.

RECOMPENSE.

THE days are all too short for love

In cold and bleak December;

I love the long, sweet days of June,

So blissful to remember.

Those long, long days when blossoms blow,

How love then waxes stronger!

But though the days are shorter now,

nights are so much longer!

The Optimist.

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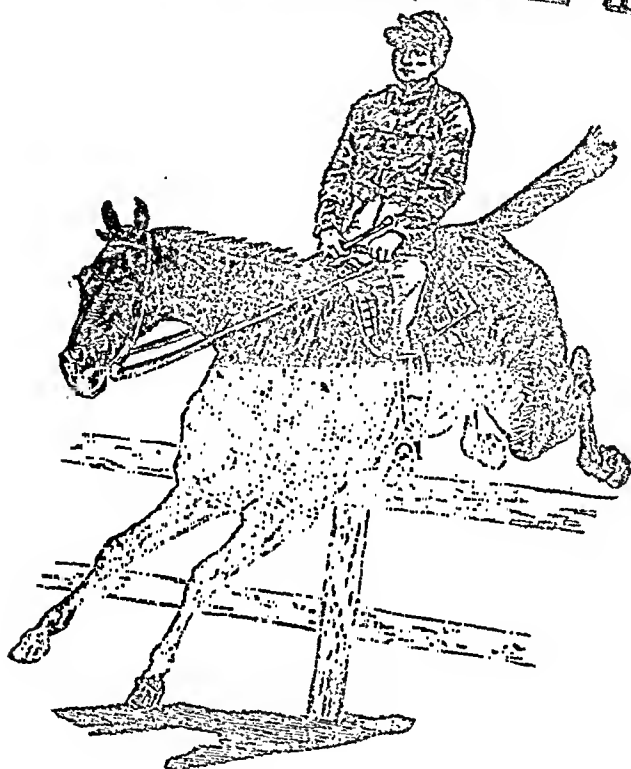
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